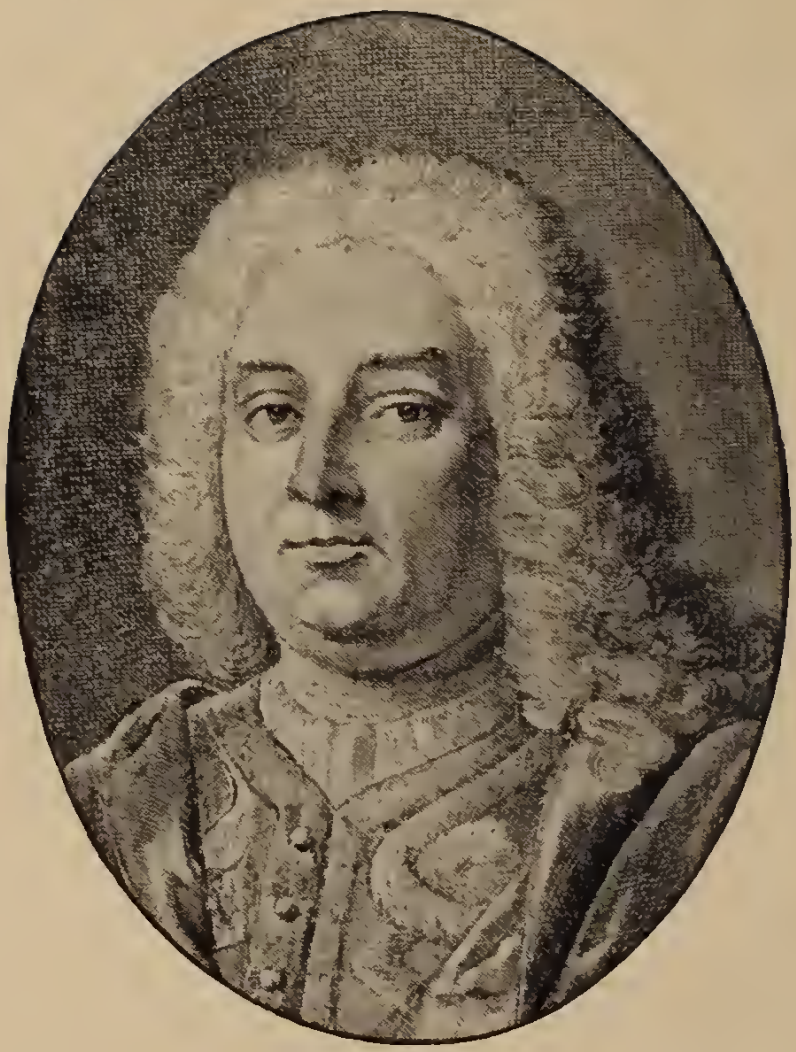
HANDEL



THE WORLD'S WORKERS.

Handel.

BY

ELIZA CLARKE.

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HANDEL.

CHAPTER I.

A STRONG WILL.

IT is Sunday morning, and service is just over in the private chapel of the Castle of Sächse-Weissenfels. Some of the worshippers have left, but the Duke and a confidential servant stand together down below, while up in the organ-loft several musicians linger. The organist lifts a little boy about seven years old on to the high stool before the organ, and bids the bellows blower do his duty, while the child's tiny hands bring such music out of the instrument that the bystanders look at one another and at him in amazement.

"Who is playing?" asks the Duke of his companion, as the music rises and falls, dying away in echoes under the vaulted roof.

"It is the little Handel from Halle, my grandfather's youngest son," is the answer.

"Bring him and his father here to me," is the Duke's

command, and in a few minutes the old man and his little son stand before him.

"Put these in your pocket, my boy," says the kind-hearted Duke, handing the child more bright coins than he had ever seen before, and to the father he talks in persuasive tones which alter the whole tenor of the child's future life, and place his feet on the threshold of Paradise.

This happened long ago: over a hundred and ninety years have rolled away since that Sunday morning, and the name of George Frederick Handel is a household word wherever the English tongue is spoken. He was the little boy who played for the first time on the great organ, and all unconsciously swept away the obstacles that had hitherto barred his way in following the art he loved. He was the child of his father's old age, tenderly cherished and cared for; but he was determined to be a musician, and his parent was equally determined to make a lawyer of him, and had positively refused to allow him to have any instruction in music, or even to visit friends who loved the harmony of sweet sounds.

Perhaps this was not so extraordinary as it appears, for the Handels had always been a practical family, and earned their living by downright hard work and industry, and they looked upon art generally, and music in particular, as frivolity, and not at all likely to help any one to rise in the world.

The quaint old town of Halle in Lower Saxony,

about twenty-five miles north of Leipzig, was a busy, prosperous place in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and attracted the attention of a copper-smith of Breslau, Valentine Handel, who migrated thither with his young wife, and, after obtaining the freedom of the town, worked hard and saved money, and managed to bring up his family in decent comfort. There were five sons and one daughter. Two of the former grew up to the paternal trade, while two others died in childhood; and the youngest, George, who was only fourteen when his father died, made a better position for himself than any of the rest. The barbers of that period were also the surgeons and dentists, and the barber of Halle, Herr Christoph Oettinger, who united in his own person all three functions, took young George Handel as his assistant, probably as his apprentice in the first place. He died in April, 1639, leaving a widow about twenty-eight years old, who was quite able to carry on the business with the aid of her husband's assistant, who, though young, had already proved his value. In February, 1643, she was married to George Handel, who thus became a freeman of Halle before he was twenty-one. They lived happily together, and had six children, only two of whom, Dorothea and Karl, lived to grow up.

Meister Görge, as he was now called, worked diligently at his profession, and in 1652, when he was thirty years of age, was appointed town surgeon of

Giebichenstein, a suburb of Halle, and soon afterwards was made Surgeon-in-Ordinary and Valet-de-Chambre to Prince Augustus of Saxony, a wise and good man, who ruled Halle very justly from the conclusion of the thirty years' war till his death in 1680, when the Elector of Brandenberg took up the reins of government, and gave Meister Görge the same position in his own household as he had enjoyed in that of Prince Augustus.

Frau Handel, who was twelve years older than her husband, died in October, 1682, at the ripe old age of seventy-two, and about six months afterwards the widower married Dorothea Taust, the daughter of a Lutheran pastor of Giebichenstein, who on February 23rd, 1685, became the mother of a son who was named George, after his father and his maternal grandfather, and who lived to be the great musician whom all the world still delights to honour.

He was not his mother's first-born, for her eldest boy died within an hour or so after his birth, and he was no doubt all the more cherished on that account.

Although the weather was cold and dismal, the babe was carried the very day after he was born over to the Liebfrauenkirche, and there baptised, the quantity of swaddling clothes always worn by German infants no doubt accounting for his parents having no fear as to sending him out at such a very tender age, and in the depth of winter. Like all boy babies, he had two

godfathers, Herr Philipp Fehrsdorff, the Court Administrator at Langendorff; and Herr Zacharias Kleinhempel, the town barber of Halle, an old professional friend of his father's, who lived in the Naumarckt ; and one godmother, Fraulein Anna Taust, his mother's sister, between whom and the child, in whom she took an almost maternal interest, there was always a warm affection.

Later on two sisters were added to the family, Dorothea Sophia and Johanna Christina, and they were a very happy little party in a roomy old house near the Market Place, and also conveniently handy to the dark old Moritzburg, where Prince Augustus had formerly held his small court. It is now pointed out to strangers under the name of "Grosser Schlamm, No. 4."

If the names of places go for anything, the spot where this house was built must originally have been on the mud or marsh ; but all traces of that had long been drained away, and it was situated in a very pleasant and busy part of the town. Many are the pilgrims who now visit it, and then go to the great church dedicated to "Our dear Lady," with its dim half lights, and rich carvings, and tall towers with the bridge between them, and try to picture to themselves what Halle was like in Handel's childhood, before it became the seat of a University, when there were no professors and no bands of students, but only the quiet, busy burghers, with their families and apprentices.

We, too, will follow their example, and try to see in our mind's eye the busy Marktplatz, where every roof was red tiled, high and steep, with row upon row of little dormer windows belonging to attics, and store and lumber rooms, all of which were very much needed by people whose houses were over and behind their shops, so that they had to accommodate all their goods and packages, as well as their families. Many of the dealers in linen and woollen cloth had rows of heavy looms fitted up in long rooms, where men sat and made the substantial white webs and broad cloths sold in their masters' shops; so the houses were obliged to be spacious. Then there were storks' nests among the chimney stacks, and every burgher brought up his children to love and protect the long-legged birds which were supposed to bring good luck to the family on whose roof they dwelt. The streets were narrow and dark, and the Moritzburg, with its many memories of brave men and knightly deeds, rose high above them.

Here was a great red tower, and the legend of a giant named Roland who once dwelt there; but it was only a tradition even then, though no doubt there was some foundation of truth in it. The Rathhaus, quaint and picturesque, was old and stately, and the deliberations of the burghers within its walls were as grave and business-like as themselves. The salt springs in the neighbourhood were an unfailing source of wealth, and consequently the men of Halle

were prosperous and well-to-do in a quiet, homely way, and the Handels were highly respected among them.

Little George Frederick, like other children, liked toys that made a noise, and his friends gave him small drums and trumpets, whistles, horns, &c. He early discovered what music could be got from a Jew's harp, and also from a flute, and with the aid of his playmates he organised a mimic orchestra in which all these instruments were played. His father at first laughed, and thought it only a childish freak; but when he discovered that his little boy was in earnest, and that music was as the breath of life to him, he set his face sternly against it, and declared "he would have no more of such jingling." He went still further, and forbade all practising music of any kind, and declared that thenceforth "all houses in which music is practised must be avoided." He was an old man, and perhaps disliked all kinds of noise, over and above his persuasion that music was not a profitable study for an embryo lawyer.

This prohibition was the only cloud between father and son, for the child was obedient, and showed a fair amount of application to his tasks; but without music he could not live, and it is extremely probable that his mother or aunt aided and abetted him in evading his father's commands. Some one, at all events, must have helped him, for he managed to get hold of an old clavichord, an instrument which we

who have our pianos should be inclined to despise, but which was of untold value to him.

A clavichord was a sort of little keyboard, not unlike those which we sometimes see played at the corners of the streets. It was not quite dumb, though its sounds were so muffled that they were scarcely audible except to the performer, and its sounds were often called "Mouse-music." Some stood on legs like the old spinets, and others could be placed on a table; and it was probably a small clavichord of this latter kind that George Frederick Handel carried up to a garret under the tiled roof of the house, into which his father was not likely to penetrate.

The love of music conquered sleep when he became the happy owner of this precious little instrument; and when the rest of the family were wrapped in sound slumber, he used to steal up to his garret and practise what he knew or had heard, and improvise new melodies for himself. He was one of the few whose inborn genius can find its own way to a great extent without the aid of lessons, and these stolen practisings were of inestimable value. It was scarcely possible to prevent any inhabitant of Halle from occasionally hearing good music, for two or three times a week it was then, as now, the custom to play or sing chorales on the tower of the Liebfrauenkirche. These were seasons of delight to George Frederick, as he stood and listened, retaining the melodies and reproducing them on his clavichord as

soon as he had the opportunity, and thus the flame was kept alight and fed from time to time with music that probably gave the tone and colour to future masterpieces.

Meister Görge, Surgeon-in-Ordinary to the Elector of Brandenburg, as you will remember, had a grown-up family before he married his second wife. The fifth son, Karl, had married young, and had a son, George Christian, born in July, 1675, and therefore ten years older than the juvenile George Frederick, who stood to him in the relation of a half-uncle. It was no doubt his grandfather's influence that procured for this youth the post of Valet-de-Chambre to the clever and art-loving Duke of Sächse-Weissenfels, who, like so many other German potentates, held his small court in all solemnity, though his estate and revenues were not larger than those of many an English squire. His great delight was music, and the fame of the musicians attached to his Kapelle had reached Halle and dwelt in the mind of little George Frederick, who naturally heard whatever news reached the family about their relative, and what he heard and did in the ducal household. There came a day when the clever old surgeon of Halle was summoned to the Court of Sächse-Weissenfels, most likely on his grandson's suggestion, and started off at once. His little boy begged hard to go with him. There was plenty of room in the carriage; he wanted to see his big nephew; and though last, but not least, even if this was not

mentioned, he wanted to hear the music at Sächse-Weissenfels. The father would not listen to his proposal, so the child coaxed in vain, and saw his parent drive away without him. But his will was strong and his limbs sturdy, so he set off running after the carriage, not showing himself, however, till he was too far from home to be sent back. At last it halted, and the child, all dusty and hot, came forward, braving his father's anger, and feeling sure that he had gained his purpose. A good scolding for disobedience and wilfulness he deserved and got, but there was no help for it: the father was obliged to take him on to Sächse-Weissenfels, and that was exactly what the boy wanted.

When the pair reached the castle, Meister Görge had his business to attend to, and the child was to a certain extent free. He soon made the acquaintance of the various musicians of the choir, and they took him to their rehearsals, and when Sunday came let him go up into the organ-loft, where, as you have seen, he was allowed to try the great organ, and being heard by the duke was encouraged and praised, while his father was seriously spoken to about his boy's wonderful gift and the duty of cultivating it.

As we read the story, and judge of it by the light of our own feelings, it seems not impossible that whoever helped the child to get a clavichord and use it in the garret at home must have connived at his following

his father's carriage, perhaps even arranged behind the scenes for the summons to Sächse-Weissenfels and the co-operation of the kindly players and singers, ready as such men always are to foster young talent and give it a helping hand. However this may have been, it was the turning-point in young Handel's life; for though his father did not yield one iota of his intention of making him a lawyer, he allowed himself to be persuaded that music need not hinder his education and future studies, and promised to give him every advantage in his power.

CHAPTER II.

THE WONDER-CHILD.

It appears that the memorable trip to Sächse-Weissenfels took place when Handel was about seven years old, and it seems that he took his father's consent to allow him to study music as a good boy ought to do, and made it a motive for working hard at his Latin and other lessons by way of proving his gratitude. A selfish, wrong-headed child would have applied himself to the one and neglected the other.

There was only one person in Halle to whom the boy could be entrusted, and that was Friederick William Zackau, who had been appointed organist at the Liebfrauenkirche in 1684, the year before young Handel's

birth, and retained it till his death in 1721. He soon became very fond of his talented pupil, and taught him all he knew. This included fugue and counterpoint in the way of theoretic music, and also how to play the organ, harpsichord, violin, and hautboy, with other instruments used in the orchestras of the day. Nothing seemed hard to the child, or else his power of surmounting difficulties was almost past comprehension. His skill on the organ and harpsichord was the wonder of all who heard him, and so clever was he in composition that almost every week he produced a new sonata, a cantata for instruments and voices, or an exercise, or variation on some familiar theme. His own account was that the hautboy was his favourite instrument, and he wrote more for that than for anything else. It is certain that a book containing six sonatas for two hautboys and bass written by Handel while under Zackau's tutelage was bought some years afterwards in Germany by Lord Polworth and given to Weidemann, the flute-player, and that it ultimately found its way into the royal collection, from which it is now thought to have disappeared.

He worked so diligently at his classics, giving his father the utmost satisfaction, that probably music came quite easily to him as it does to some few in whom it is inborn, or he would not have been able to accomplish so much.

In about three years Zackau felt that there was nothing more he could teach the boy in the way of

music, and said so frankly. He also recognised and pointed out that his pupil had real genius, something far beyond and above mere talent, and accompanied by the steady perseverance and good sense that are too seldom found in a genius. George Frederick never forgot his first master, and when he died gave his widow a yearly allowance of money, and would have done his best to help her son on in the world had he not proved to be a tipsy, good-for-nothing fellow. This, of course, was after he himself had risen to prosperity.

Meister Görge must have been very proud of his son, and thoroughly convinced at last of the importance and value of his musical powers, for he allowed himself to be coaxed into consenting to send him to Berlin for further instruction in 1696, when he was little more than ten years old.

Berlin, where the Elector Friedrich, who later on became King Friedrich I. of Prussia, lived and reigned with his clever wife, the Electress Sophia Charlotte, was just then a centre of German art, and especially of music, as the Electress was herself one of the most remarkable amateur musicians in Europe. She had been one of the Abbate Steffani's pupils, and though she welcomed professors of harmony from all parts of the world, her great preference was for Italians. The Court of Berlin was music mad; concerts and operas were the social events of the time; and Princes and Princesses, under the enthusiastic direction of the

Electress, sang and played indefatigably at the one and danced at the other. Her great favourite was Attilio Ariosti, her Kapellmeister, who was a remarkable and most kind-hearted man from Bologna. Giovanni Battista Buononcini was another prominent musician at Berlin ; and, besides these two, there were many minor stars. This was the circle into which little George Frederick Handel was introduced in his eleventh year, having been sent to Berlin in charge of a friend of the family. He was presented to the Elector and Electress and invited to play before them. Their surprise and delight, not only at his mechanical skill but at the quality and expression of his music, were unbounded, and Ariosti took him at once under his fostering care.

The Italian *maestro* was then about thirty-six years of age, and no father could have been kinder and more affectionate to the wonder-child than he. For hours together George Frederick sat on his knee at the harpsichord, not hampered and restrained by too much teaching, as he might have been by a smaller man, but listened to appreciatively and guided wisely.

Buononcini pursued opposite tactics, for he took no notice of the boy at all, either in the way of praise or blame, and showed the most utter indifference till the little fellow attracted such universal attention that he could no longer stand aloof. He therefore composed a cantata with a thorough bass for the harpsi-

chord full of chromatic progressions of very great difficulty, and requested the child to accompany it at sight. It proved just as easy to him as any other musical task, for he played it correctly, grasping every difficulty, and exhibiting such taste and feeling in the performance that Buononcini was obliged thenceforth to respect his talent, though he never showed any more cordial feeling, and under the cloak of civility cherished bitter rivalry in his heart of hearts, which brought forth bad fruit in future years.

The Elector Friedrich by this time foresaw that if little Handel lived he would be one of the most extraordinary geniuses the world had ever seen, and out of genuine liking, as well as the desire to pose as his benefactor, offered to take him into his service then and there, to send him at his own princely expense to Italy and give him every advantage in the way of education, and on his return to place him in a good position. This offer, which would have tempted many fathers, had no attractions for Meister Görge; he wished the boy to pursue the solid classical education which would be of value to him throughout life, and felt pretty sure that going to Italy as the Elector's protégé would mean the exclusive study of music, a course of injudicious spoiling, and the utter absence of all home influence and training. So he thanked the potentate with becoming warmth and gratitude, but put his veto on the scheme, declaring that he could not part entirely with the child of his old age, and sent

for him to come home to Halle at once. He had not much more time in which to enjoy the boy's presence and watch his progress, for on the 11th of February, 1697, Meister Görge died, surrounded by his family, beloved and regretted, at the age of seventy-five.

The old man's practical wisdom and foresight were proved nearly twenty years afterwards, when the King died, and his successor, Friedrich Wilhelm I., whose taste for music was but small, sent all the court musicians about their business. If Handel had then been among them he would have been cast adrift with the rest, but thanks to his prudent parent, he had already begun to carve out his own career and fortune.

George Frederick was at this time twelve years old, and under the guidance of his good mother went on diligently with his studies, and really distinguished himself as a Latin scholar, besides mastering French and Italian, to which he afterwards added the English language.

In 1694, the Elector Friedrich of Brandenburg had founded a University at Halle, which was called by his name; and in course of time became one of the best and most prominent Protestant colleges in Germany.

In its young days it offered considerable advantages, and Frau Dorothea Handel wished her son, on leaving school, to enter himself as a student there.

His music had already made him famous; strangers, passing through Halle, esteemed themselves fortunate if they were able to hear him play; and musicians sought his company, corresponded with him about their art, and frequently co-operated with him in compositions.

In 1701, the Calvinistic Lutherans of Halle, who worshipped at the Moritzburg Cathedral, and among whom, from Meister Görge's connection with the Moritzburg, the Handel family was popular, dismissed their organist, a certain Johann Christoph Leporin, and appointed George Frederick, then just seventeen, as his successor on a year's probation, with a salary of fifty thalers per annum, paid quarterly and an official residence, which, as he did not require it, was let for sixteen additional thalers. Perhaps posterity might not have known much about this appointment had not the "reformed subjects" of Halle communicated with the Elector, by that time King Friedrich of Prussia, who continued to take an interest in the youth, on the subject.

The Konigliche Schloss-und-Domkirche zur Moritzburg, though not so fine or old a building as the Liebfrauenkirche, had a very fine organ, which had been built in 1667, at the expense of the Grand Duke Augustus, Meister Görge's friend and patron; and it had fifteen hundred pipes, twenty-eight stops, two manuals, and three pairs of capacious bellows. The organist's office was no sinecure, for he was required to

set the Psalms and cantatas for all the Sundays and the regular or irregular festivals of the year to fresh music, take all necessary measures for their correct, efficient and harmonious performances; keep his instrument in proper order and repair, and do full justice to it by his playing. Handel, however, was not afraid of work, and though he was busy with his University curriculum under Professor Buddeus, was as diligent an organist and choir master as though he had nothing else to do. The choir was a voluntary one, formed of his old schoolfellows and friends, whom he gathered together on their Wednesday and Saturday half-holidays to practise under him the higher kinds of vocal and instrumental Church music, and so much was this appreciated that all his successors in office were afterwards bound to keep up a similar choir as part of their regular duty.

The sixty-six thalers were no doubt very valuable to the family, for Meister Görge does not appear to have left his widow very well off, and she had two little girls younger than George Frederick to bring up; so it was rather wonderful that he threw up the organistship at the close of the year of probation, when he had also finished his University course; but with strong faith in his own powers, and what the future might have in store for him, he set forth like so many other German youths, on his Wanderjahre, and made his appearance in Hamburg in 1703, when he was about nineteen.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE AT HAMBURG.

HAMBURG, in Northern Germany, the important seaport of the kingdom of Hanover, and centre of a prosperous trading community, was as much the home and stronghold of German music as Berlin, in the days of the Electress Sophia, the "Philosophic Queen," had been of Italian. In 1678, a musician, named Thiele, there produced "Adam and Eve," the first "Singspiel" ever performed in German; and fourteen years later a large theatre was built, facing the Goosemarket, in which Keiser's first opera, *Basilius*, whose fame had preceded it from Wolfenbuttel, was warmly welcomed and applauded by a Hamburg audience. The sacred music composed for, and played in the churches of this old Hanse town, was also magnificent, and it is not impossible that something was known there of young Handel as an organist and a prodigy. Who introduced him to the Hamburg professionals is not known, but he would hardly have gone there without some definite promise of employment, and he was at once received into the Opera orchestra as *ripieno* second violin, not a very distinguished or lucrative post, but something to rely on, and by its aid, and a little money sent from time to time by his mother, he managed to

live and wait, with a fair amount of patience, for better times. It is said that he played his violin in a very unpretentious simple way, as if it were all he could do; but once, when the harpsichord player was absent, he took his place, after much persuasion, to the great astonishment and delight of every one who heard him.

He soon made friends among his brother musicians, and attached himself especially to Johann Mattheson, the principal tenor singer at the Opera, who was four years his senior. They went round to every organ and listened to every choir in Hamburg, rowed on the Elbe together in the summer evenings, took the lumbering packet boat up to Lubeck, and were the pleasantest of comrades. Handel often dined at the house of Mattheson's parents, and taught the singer counterpoint, while he in return gave his new acquaintance some useful wrinkles with regard to dramatic music.

The British Ambassador or Representative at Hamburg just then was Sir Cyril Wych, to whom Mattheson introduced Handel, who soon came to be on intimate terms with the family, and gave lessons on the harpsichord to the little son.

In the middle of August Mattheson was invited to Lubeck by one of the officials of that town, that he might succeed to the post of organist in the Marienkirche, which was just then vacated by Dietrich Buxtehude, a clever musician who had an only

daughter, and was extremely desirous that whoever succeeded him at his beloved organ might also marry his child. Mattheson was more of a harpsichord than an organ player, and took Handel with him. The journey this time was made by coach, and the mental occupation of the two young men, as the heavy vehicle rolled along the flat roads, was making fugues. Wherever they found either of the two instruments they played them, and at Lubeck they listened to Buxtehude with much reverential interest. They were both most hospitably entertained and fêted during their stay, but neither felt inclined to woo and win the young lady, so they shook the dust of Lubeck off their feet and returned to Hamburg.

Mattheson tells us that the idea of melody *per se* first dawned on Handel after his connection with the Hamburg Opera. He had always been great in fugue and counterpoint, and used to set very long airs and interminable cantatas, which, though perfectly harmonious, were long and dreary. This was quite a characteristic of old music, and Kuhnau was one of the first composers to introduce melody into his pieces.

The Opera House was not open during spring and summer, because every one who could afford it went out of Hamburg into the country, and consequently the musicians would have had the unprofitable and irksome work of playing to empty seats, unless they had closed their doors and applied themselves to

other business. In 1704, Mattheson took advantage of this enforced holiday to go to Holland, where he had the pleasure of playing on all the best organs in the towns he visited, heard every local performer of any note, and gave some concerts at Amsterdam. So highly was he thought of that the authorities at Haarlem offered him the appointment of organist to their cathedral, with a salary equivalent to £150 a year, an income which at that time, and in that country, represented a great deal of solid comfort, and even luxury. He seems to have been divided between accepting this and a project of trying his fortune in England, but a certain reluctance to leave the directors of the Hamburg Opera in the lurch, combined with a letter from his friend Handel, which, though written in all sincerity, could not have failed to flatter his vanity, induced him to relinquish all other views and return home. This is what Handel said to him before he had been very long away, the writer being probably ignorant of the offer of the post at Haarlem:—

March 18th, 1704.

"I often long to enjoy your very agreeable conversation, and hope very soon to do so, since the time approaches, when, without your presence, nothing can be attempted at the Opera. I therefore humbly beg you to give me notice of your returning, that I may take this opportunity of fulfilling my obligation by coming to meet you," &c., &c.

It was rather a stiff style of writing between one young man and another, but Mattheson was four years older than Handel, and those were the days when children called their parents Sir and Madam, and did not sit down unless bidden in their presence. The same formality extended into other relations of life, and friendship flourished on mutual respect better perhaps than it does on excessive familiarity.

You may be sure that Handel, who could not afford to travel, was not idle while the Opera was closed, and his friend absent. It was during this time that he made his first attempt at what has been called "setting the Bible to music," and wrote a "Passion Oratorio," which was performed on Good Friday of that very year, so he must have done it with his usual rapidity.

From the time of the Reformation it had been the custom to sing the History of the Passion of our Lord in the churches during Holy week, the words of the gospel narrative being alternated with choruses and the popular old chorales, of which everybody knew both words and music by heart, so that immense congregations joined in them heart and soul. In the spring of 1704 a musician named Keiser, as well as Handel, wrote Passion oratorios at Hamburg, both entirely dispensing with the chorales, the former simply setting to music the words of a poem written expressly for the purpose, and thereby drawing down upon himself the wrath of the Lutheran clergy, while

the latter introduced St. John's narrative verbatim, in conjunction with some verses by a friendly poet. His work was much admired, and entirely escaped condemnation from the pulpit, though, as a musical composition, it was afterwards severely criticised. For more than a century the score of this first oratorio disappeared, but it was discovered in Handel's own writing and with his signature some years ago among the Polchau MSS. in the Berlin Library, and was published in 1860 by the German Handel Society.

Mattheson was not back in time to hear his friend's oratorio, but when he did come, he brought an opera of his own composition entitled *Cleopatra*, the rehearsal and preparation of which he superintended with great care, and it was performed at the Opera House on October 20th for the first time, Handel presiding at the harpsichord, and the author singing the part of Antonius which he had naturally written for himself as first tenor. Antonius dying long before the end of the opera Mattheson had no more to do, and asked Handel to resign the harpsichord to him, which he appears to have done on several occasions.

As autumn deepened into winter, the friendship of the two young men suffered a severe shock. Sir Cyril Wych appointed Mattheson tutor to his little son, and secretary to the Legation, and, not satisfied with these additions to his position and income, he took upon

himself the harpsichord lessons which Handel had for some time given the child. That at least was the view Handel took of it, for the little money thus earned was of importance to him. But there are two sides to every question, and perhaps, as Mattheson was a good harpsichord-player, he felt it to be his duty to save his patron extra expense by including the music lessons of his pupil with the other studies he was engaged to superintend.

However this may have been, Handel was a good deal irritated, and at the beginning of December, during the performance of *Cleopatra*, he refused to vacate his place at the harpsichord when requested to do so by Mattheson, and the latter being very cross gave him a sounding box on the ear which was no doubt intended to provoke a duel. Handel was a fine, tall, broad-shouldered young man, nearly twenty years of age, and quite ready to take his own part, so they went outside, and in front of the Opera House, before a crowd of spectators in the Goosemarket, they drew their swords and fought vigorously. Fortunately Mattheson, after a few passes, broke his sword against a large metal button on his opponent's coat; and honour being satisfied, the duel came to a bloodless end. One of the directors of the theatre, who was also a municipal councillor, made peace between the two young men before the end of the month, and on the 30th Handel dined with Mattheson, after which they both assisted at the rehearsal of *Almira*, and

thenceforth they became more affectionately intimate than ever.

We should not have gathered these particulars, which comprise nearly all we know of Handel's life at Hamburg, had not Mattheson been better remembered as an author than as a composer. He abandoned music as a profession soon after his appointment as secretary to the British resident, and wrote several critical books on the science he had so much loved in his youth. Most of the details about his early friend and comrade are given in the "Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte," which was published in 1740, and many years later, in 1761, when himself an old man, he translated into German Mainwaring's Memoirs of the author of the *Messiah.*

Almira was Handel's first opera, and though the music was magnificent, it was not wedded to immortal verse, for the story, in spite of its grandiloquent title, "The Vicissitudes of Royalty; or, Almira, Queen of Castile," was extremely poor. The lyric drama in Germany was then in a transition state, and the performances were partly in German and partly in Italian. *Almira* contained forty-four German songs, and fifteen Italian airs, and many of its strains were used over and over again in later years by the composer, and are still reckoned among his masterpieces. Its success was so great that it ran consecutively from the 8th of January, 1705, till the 25th of February, and would not have been removed

from the stage then had not Handel had a second opera ready to replace it. This was entirely in German, and was called *Nero*, and contained seventy-five airs. During the following year he produced two more operas, *Florinda* and *Daphne*, but though admired at the time, they were not destined to immortality, for the scores of all three have entirely disappeared. An imperfect score of *Almira* in Mattheson's handwriting, with Handel's autograph corrections, is in the Berlin Museum, and as its authenticity is beyond doubt, it was published by the German Handel Society in 1873, the two missing Italian arias being supplied from other sources.

Of course young Handel could not produce all these works without deriving some pecuniary benefit from them, added to which he had a great many pupils for harpsichord and organ, for whose benefit he wrote sonatas, exercises, and studies innumerable. All these were profitable sources of income, and not only enabled him to live in comfort, but to repay his good mother whatever sums she had been able to advance when he first went to Hamburg, and to make her a handsome present, and lay by two hundred ducats for the journey to Italy that is the essential pilgrimage for a musician.

CHAPTER IV.

WANDERINGS.

IT was nothing uncommon for great people from many lands to visit the Hamburg Theatre, but still there was a great flutter among the orchestra one evening, when it was known that one of the Medicis, brother to the reigning Grand Duke of Tuscany, was present, and that he had come expressly to hear Handel's *Almira*. When the opera came to an end his admiration was unbounded, and he, then and there, made the young composer the offer of taking him to Italy free of all expense, and there giving him the opportunity of studying the works of the best Italian masters.

Handel must have been of an independent turn of mind, and perhaps also he remembered a similar offer made in his childhood by the Elector Friedrich and refused by his father, and thought it would not be good policy to accept the kindness of one Prince after declining that of another. Still the occurrence very likely spurred him on to go to Italy at his own expense, as soon as he could afford it, so he worked hard and saved diligently, and after paying all that he owed he bade farewell to his friends, turned his back on Hamburg, and, as those who have studied his movements most closely think, spent the Christmas of 1706 with his mother at Halle.

It does not much matter to us who travel by rail at what time of the year we start to cross Europe from north to south, but January of 1707 must have been about the worst month Handel could have chosen for travelling from Halle to Florence. Still it was important that he should spend as much of the winter there as possible, so he set out by post and diligence, and does not seem to have met with any particular obstacle or delay. No sooner had he reached the beautiful city, than he captivated its music loving public, by producing the Cantata, *O Numi Eterni*, now known as *La Lucrezia*, which was followed by a variety of similar new works, and a re-arrangement of the overture to *Almira*, with which he incorporated some delightful dance music.

At this time Handel was a perfect musician in all respects, save one. He was a master of fugue and counterpoint, at which the Italians scoffed, but was deficient in the art of managing the voice. Perhaps he would hardly have comprehended this so early had not the Prince, who had listened to *Almira* in Hamburg, pointed it out to him, but it was the great thing the Italian school was able to teach him; and he set to work to learn it with all his might.

He did not stay very long at Florence, for he naturally wished to push on and reach Rome for Holy week, and when there church music became for some time paramount, and he produced a *Nisi Dominus*, *Dixit Dominus*, *Laudate Pueri*, and, as is generally

thought, a splendid *Magnificat*, the original autograph scores of which are all preserved in the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace.

He probably spent April, May, and perhaps June, in Rome, and then returned to Florence, where in July he produced his first purely Italian opera, *Rodrigo*, which was received with the greatest delight. There was a freshness about it that took the Florentines by storm, and the Grand Duke of Tuscany was so pleased that he presented Handel with a hundred sequins, and a service of silver plate, both of them valuable gifts, not only as proofs of favour, but as actually providing the sinews of war, for no one can live and travel in a foreign land, and among strangers without a great deal of expense.

An act of homage, which was likely to be deeply felt by Handel, is recorded of Vittoria Tesi, then queen of song and the favourite of all Florence. The principal *rôle* in *Rodrigo* had been written expressly for her voice, and she was so much delighted with both music and composer, that when the season was over she requested leave of absence, and followed Handel to Venice in January, 1708, that she might be able to sing in another new opera, which he was preparing to bring out at the request of the directors of the Teatro di S. Giovanni Grisostomo, the principal house in Venice.

It was probably love of Handel himself, as well as enthusiasm for his music, that led the fair Vittoria to

Venice, for they are said to have been engaged to be married, but, perhaps he felt that his fortune was still in the future, and the lady did not care to wait. We know very little about it, and the one thing certain is that the match did not take place.

Handel must have had some introductions to Venetian society, though he was not lionised at first, nor distinguished from any other visitor to the Queen of the Adriatic. One evening, however, he was at a masquerade, and seeing a harpsichord standing open could not resist running his fingers over the keyboard. Domenico Scarlatti, a well-known musician, happened to be present and at once exclaimed, "That must either be the famous Saxon, or the evil one himself." This meeting was the beginning of a long and faithful friendship.

Handel had not the least wish to hide his light under a bushel, and enjoyed the reception he had met with at Venice immensely. The first performance of his opera, *Agrippina*, with Vittoria Tesi as the principal female singer, was enough to turn the brain of even a more staid and sober person than the young German. The audience was beside itself with delight, and at every little pause in the music, the air was rent with shouts of "Long live the dear Saxon!"

Prince Ernest Augustus of Hanover, who spent much of his time in Venice and always had a box at S. Giovanni, was there that evening, surrounded by several English noblemen who were passing the

winter in Venice; and as they were greatly struck by the music, though less excited than the susceptible natives, Handel may be said that night to have sown the first seeds of his future success in this country.

In a few days every one was singing the airs from the new opera; it ran for twenty-seven consecutive nights, and retained a place of favour on the stage of S. Giovanni for the next twenty years. Part of the original autograph score is to be seen at Buckingham Palace, and in 1874 the whole work was reprinted by the German Handel Society.

As spring and Easter drew near, Handel once more wended his way to Rome, where he became the guest of the Marchese di Ruspoli, a nobleman of great taste and culture, and leader of the Roman Academy, then famous throughout the world under its name of Arcadia. The "Arcadians" cultivated literature, poetry, and art, and gathered around them all intellectual people who visited the Eternal City.

There was something very childish about the fanciful names by which they were known among themselves and to one another, but it was the taste and fashion of the day, not only in Rome but even in England, where every lover called himself Strephon or something similar, and if he happened to be of a poetical turn of mind, wrote verses to the girl of his heart under the name of Phyllis or Chloe.

The Marchese di Ruspoli was known in this little

circle as Olinto, and his wife was Almiride; Aiessandro Scarlatti, the father of Domenico, was called Zerpandro, and his friend Benedetto Marcello was Driante.

No member was admitted to their guild under twenty-four years of age, and as Handel was too young, he took the position of a favoured guest among them, as he was also at a rival yet friendly Academy, of which Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni was the leading spirit. Music was a more prominent feature at the Palazzo Ottoboni than among the Arcadians, and its orchestra was led by Arcangelo Corelli, the great violinist, whose disposition was as sweet as his music. He had need of all his power of self-control in Handel's company, for the "dear Saxon" had a very hasty temper and used to write such terribly difficult violin music that Corelli had the greatest difficulty in mastering it. One day while they were practising, Handel roughly snatched the violin out of his hand, in order to show him how some particular passage was to be played. Most men would have resented it, but Corelli only said, meekly, "Dear master, this music is in the French style, which I do not understand."

It is supposed that Handel wrote *La Rezurrezione*, his first Italian oratorio, at the instigation of Cardinal Ottoboni, and he certainly wrote it in the Palazzo Ruspoli, finishing it on Easter Day, 1708. The first violin part was written for Corelli, and that for the *viola da gamba*, for a patrician amateur, while flutes,

oboes, and trumpets played important parts in the orchestration.

He soon afterwards wrote another, the libretto of which was composed by Cardinal Panfili, a well-known "Arcadian," called "Fenizio" among them, and in this the overture was really too much for Corelli, and Handel substituted a symphony for it. Alessandro Scarlatti, the most noted Italian musician of his day, was delighted with Handel, and his cordial affection helped to rivet yet closer the bonds of friendship between his son and the "dear Saxon."

Cardinal Ottoboni one day put this affection to a test, which would have proved fatal to the pleasantness of future intercourse between men whose minds were of smaller calibre. He persuaded them to enter into a contest, first on the harpsichord, and then on the piano. Of course, he and some of his circle were the judges, and they pronounced the two perfectly equal on the former instrument, but considered Handel by far the better performer on the organ. Henceforward Handel always spoke enthusiastically of Scarlatti, and the Italian, whenever complimented on his organ playing, crossed himself with all the fervour of a pious Roman Catholic and say, "Ah, but you should hear Handel!"

From Rome our young German went to Naples where he was received with open arms, and produced a serenata on the same theme as the *Acis and Galatea* he wrote some years afterwards in England, proving that the idea had been born in his mind though

it was not yet perfected. It was very much liked, but there was just one little drawback which probably caused it to sink into comparative oblivion. This was the fact that the part of the principal bass singer required a compass of two octaves and a half. Perhaps there was such an one in Naples at that time, and it may have been written for him. Handel, as you have seen, delighted in difficulties, but even he could not create voices.

He seems to have gone back to Rome for Christmas, and there heard the famous *Pifa* which in later years he introduced into the *Messiah*, and then he spent a little time with his friends in Florence, winding up his stay in Italy at Venice with the Abbate Steffani and Baron Kielmansegge, in whose company he bade adieu to the "land of the cypress and myrtle" and went home to Halle in the spring or early summer of 1710.

There he found the old home circle completely broken up by death and marriage, for the elder of his two sisters, Dorothea Sophia, was married to Dr. Michael Dieterich Michaelsen, a lawyer of considerable wealth and high character, much older than herself, but who from that time forth adopted the Handel family as his own. This, though a change, contained its own elements of comfort and joy; but there was also the shadow of recent death, for Frau Handel and Dorothea were both overwhelmed with grief at the loss of the youngest daughter, Johanna

Christina, who had been cut off by consumption a few months previously. But the visit of her beloved only son was a comfort and gleam of brightness to the mother, for she could not but feel proud of his gifts and the manner in which they had been recognised. He could not stay long with her, for his future was not yet assured, and he needed not only an income but a sphere in which he and his work would be appreciated.

Handel next started off to Hanover, where his friend Steffani, who had once been Kapellmeister to the Elector, was most likely on a visit. The Saxon musician was well known in the little realm of Hanover, and Steffani told of his Italian triumphs to such good purpose that the Elector appointed him his Kapellmeister, an office which secured him an annual stipend and gave him free leave of absence that he might still rove about to his heart's content. Having secured his appointment, Handel went to Dusseldorf, where he had a long standing invitation from the Elector Palatine, whom he had met in Rome, and who was the devoted friend of Corelli, and thence he went through Holland and crossed the sea to England about the beginning of December, 1710, little foreseeing that it would prove to be the land of his adoption.

CHAPTER V.

"VENI, VIDI, VICI."

GOOD music was then at a very low ebb in England, Purcell had been fifteen years dead, and none had as yet arisen to take his place. Every one had great expectations from Handel, and he was engaged to write the opera of "Rinaldo" for the Queen's Theatre, the director, Mr. Aaron Hill, himself sketching out the story from Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, while Giacomo Rossi translated it into Italian verse, complaining bitterly all the time that he could not do it fast enough to keep pace with Handel's music, which was composed in a fortnight.

There was a Nicolini in Handel's time, and he it was who sang the part of Rinaldo when the opera appeared; and Valentini, Cassani, the Boschis, husband and wife, Signora Pilotti Schiavonetta, and Isabella Girardeau were the other singers. It was received with such enthusiasm as had never been known before in this country, and was revived over and over again at intervals, the last time being in 1731. A curious innovation was at first made in the opening act, where a song known to musicians as the *Aria d'imitazione* was sung to an accompaniment of flutes, interspersed with the twittering of live birds, a number of which

were at that moment let loose on the stage. The poor little things were too frightened to sing, and as they added nothing to the effect a great deal of rather unkind fun was made of the proceeding. The original manuscript no longer exists as a whole, though there are parts of it at Buckingham Palace, and in the Fitzwilliam Library at Cambridge. A portion was published by Walsh, the music-seller, soon after the opera came out, and reached a second and amended edition. Walsh made £1,500 by it, and Handel, who scarcely thought it fair, said that Walsh should compose the next opera, and he would publish it, as the most profitable part of the business.

As Handel wrote and worked so rapidly he had plenty of time for society, and preferred that of musical people, though, as he had a great fund of common sense, had travelled much, and enjoyed a liberal education, he was found to be a pleasant companion by many of the leading men of the period, with whom music did not happen to be the ruling passion. Among them were Lord Burlington, and Mr. Andrews, William Babell, and many others, including Mr. Thomas Britton, who was then and for many years after known as the "Small Coal Man." His poor abode, which was merely a stable and loft, was the rendezvous of some of the most noted men and women of the time, who appreciated his talents and respected his industrious frugality. He was born of poor parents, picked up a great deal of information

by hook or by crook, and educated himself in a most surprising manner. He earned his living by selling small coals from door to door, carrying the sack containing them on his back, and as soon as his day's work was over he retired to his loft over the stable in which his coals were stored, washed and changed his clothes, and spent the evening either in study or in practising on the *viola da gamba*. He had contrived to save enough money to purchase a small chamber-organ and a harpsichord, and had also collected quite a treasure of rare books and manuscripts.

Mr. Britton was "at home" every Thursday evening, and the company, gentle and simple, who climbed up the rude outside ladder to his low-roofed loft in Aylesbury Street, Clerkenwell, in which a tall man could scarcely stand upright, were regaled with good music and clever talk. Here came John Bannister the violinist, Sir Roger L'Estrange, a good amateur violoncello player, Dr. Pepusch, of musical renown, Woollaston the painter, Wichello, Needler, John Hughes, Lady Queensberry, and Handel, who took the general direction of the performances when in London, and played his best on the small organ and harpsichord. Here Matthew Dubourg, who became afterwards a splendid violinist, was lifted up on to a stool in order to play his first little solo.

These gatherings were delightful, but it is sad to

relate that they were brought to an unexpected end through Britton's sudden death of fright at a ventriloquial trick.

The London opera season was over on the 2nd of June, and Handel having no longer any excuse for lingering in London, returned to Hanover, where his kind old friend the Abbate Steffani had been officiating for him as Kapellmeister. He busied himself for a short time in writing concertos to be played by the Court orchestra, songs for Princess Caroline, the young wife of the Elector's eldest son, and duets and cantatas innumerable. In the autumn he went to Halle, and stood godfather to his sister's child, named Johanna, after the young girl who died during her brother's absence in Italy, and returned a few days afterwards to London, where he produced a new opera, *Il Pastor Fido*, at the Queen's Theatre, on the 26th of November, 1712. As the christening took place on the 23rd of that month, we feel that Handel must have travelled with the fastest of post-horses, and had a remarkably quick passage across the Channel on this occasion. Most likely, however, the date of the family gathering at Halle is incorrect.

The Elector renewed his leave of absence from Hanover, on condition that he should return to his duties there within a reasonable time, a term that on Handel's part proved marvellously elastic. He seems to have spent most of the first year after he came

back to London with a Mr. Adams, a distinguished amateur, who had a pleasant country house at Barn Elms, in Surrey, and it is probable that during that time he composed the opera of *Teseo*, which was first performed to a crowded house at the Queen's on the 10th of January, 1713. It went on for twelve consecutive nights, and was the backbone of the house during the whole operatic season. On the 15th of May there must have been what we now call a benefit night, for there was a special performance "for Mr. Handel, with an entertainment for the harpsichord," and on the 30th the season came to an end.

The 6th of February, 1713, was Queen Anne's forty-ninth birthday, and in honour of it Handel set to music a birthday ode with English words, which is considered one of the earliest indications of the grand style that culminated in the *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt.*

About the same time he composed the Utrecht *Te Deum* in honour of the peace of that year, though it was not performed till the public thanksgiving in St. Paul's Cathedral, at which the poor Queen was too ill to be present, though she afterwards heard it at St. James's, and was so delighted that she bestowed on the composer a life-pension of £200 a year. In these two compositions Handel touched the English heart, and created with it that bond of sympathy which led him to forsake his

own country and his father's house and take up his abode among us. Perhaps he would not have been very graciously received if he had gone back, for the Elector of Hanover did not approve of the Peace of Utrecht, and long bore a grudge against his Kapellmeister for the popular *Te Deum*, which continued to be a favourite in England, and was played annually at St. Paul's in alternation with Purcell's *Te Deum* at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy for the next thirty years.

It sounds very strange to us who know Burlington House principally in connection with the Royal Academy, and are accustomed to see strings of cabs, carriages, and omnibuses, and swarms of pedestrians continually hurrying past it, to be told that in Handel's time it stood by itself among green fields. "Why," said George I. to Lord Burlington, "did you build your house in the middle of the fields?"

"I chose the spot because no one could come and build beside me," was the reply.

And, indeed, so far was central Piccadilly considered from the village of Charing and St. James's Palace, and so lonely was the road thither, that it was not safe to go to or from Burlington House at night without linkmen and armed servants as some sort of defence against the highwaymen who infested the suburbs of London. Lord Burlington loved to gather clever men round him, and Handel became his guest for three years, which must have been quite an oasis

of quiet in his restless, energetic life. He played both organ and harpsichord to his patron's guests, conducted the musical performances, which were frequent in that hospitable mansion, went down continually to St. Paul's Cathedral where congregations listened rapturously while he played the great organ, and on many evenings when he had no pressing engagement elsewhere, he retired with the choir to the Queen's Arms Tavern, in the adjacent Churchyard, and played on the harpsichord for hours together. Sometimes after the afternoon service, in the Cathedral, Handel would persuade some one to stay and blow the bellows for him, and then taking off his coat, would play till far on into the night. On many of these occasions a lad named Greene, about fourteen years of age, considered it a privilege to blow for him. This youth as he grew up chose music as his profession, though he never attained any great excellence in it. When he had to write a piece of new music as a preliminary to obtaining his doctor's degree at the University of Cambridge, he chose Pope's "Eurydice" for the words, but did not link them to a very wonderful melody. The poet, who was a great admirer of Handel, some time afterwards requested him to set the same poem to music, but he declined, saying:—

"It is the very thing what my bellows-blower has already set for a doctor's degree at Cambridge!"

He, perhaps, would not have made the observation had not Greene been a very warm supporter of Buononcini, whose rivalry when they both found themselves in London was quite as marked, and a great deal more mischievous than when Handel was a little boy at Berlin.

While Handel was living with Lord Burlington an event occurred which put an end to all idea of his eventual return to Hanover. Queen Anne, who had long been ailing, died on the 1st of August, 1714, and that very day the Elector of Hanover was in due form and order proclaimed as her successor. This was a dignity he had not always had reason to expect, for Queen Anne and her husband, Prince George of Denmark, had been the parents of seven children, and fondly hoped that at least one of them would have lived to succeed his mother on the English throne. But the last survivor died in 1701, and immediately afterwards an Act of Settlement was passed setting aside all other relatives of the Stuarts, and vesting the succession in Sophia, the Electress dowager of Hanover, who was a daughter of Elizabeth, the Queen of Bohemia, the daughter of James I., who, in the days of her youth and beauty, had been called the Queen of Hearts. George I. was her son, and although he knew that he would one day be King of England, if he outlived his distant relative Queen Anne, he did not trouble himself to learn our language, and it used to be said that Sir Robert Walpole, after his accession,

governed him in Latin, for he and the other ministers were quite as ignorant of German or French as their Royal master was of Latin.

Such was the man who, six weeks after the Queen died, came over and was crowned, on the 20th of October, in Westminster Abbey.

Handel, conscious that his conduct towards the Elector had not been quite as considerate as it ought, could not venture to present himself at Court, but felt sure that a time would speedily come when he would have the opportunity of apologising and re-instating himself in favour. He now began again to write for the stage and produced the opera of *Amadigi*, founded on the ancient French romance *Amadis de Gaul.* The old Theatre had changed its name, and was called the "King's," and there on May 15th, 1715, *Amadigi* was first played, and the famous Mrs. Robinson for the first time sang Handel's music. The King and his daughter-in-law, Princess Caroline, came repeatedly to hear it, and freely expressed their opinion of its great merits, but still the former Kapellmeister was not invited to Court, and his friends turned over in their minds many schemes for bringing him into favour again.

Father Thames, until it became so crowded with steamers and small mercantile craft, was always beloved by our sovereigns, and many a gorgeous pageant has moved down that silent highway in

bygone times. George I., with his family and a splendid retinue of courtiers, could not have hit on any pleasanter way of showing themselves to the populace than by going in state barges, one brilliant August day, from Whitehall to Limehouse, and when they came back by the same route in the evening both banks of the river were illuminated, cannon fired at intervals, and large numbers of wealthy citizens in their best clothes followed the procession in boats. The fête was in preparation for some time beforehand, and Handel's kind friends, Lord Burlington and Baron Kielmansegge, thought they saw the opportunity of bringing him prominently, yet gracefully, into notice, and he fell into their plan most willingly.

The King's one passion of an artistic nature was music, so Handel composed something quite new for wind and stringed instruments, engaged an efficient orchestra, hired a boat large enough to accommodate them, acted himself as conductor, and followed the Royal barge closely enough to let the lovely melodies be clearly heard, though softened, as music on the water always is. This was a delicate compliment as well as a great treat, and the King, after listening with the utmost pleasure, asked to whom he owed it. Baron Kielmansegge, who was on board with his Majesty, told him, and at once plunged into such a clever apology and such warm praise of Handel that the monarch's vexation with him was put on one side,

and he said he should be happy to see the musician at Court on the first opportunity. Here the services of another faithful friend stood him in good stead, for Geminiani, having been asked to play some new concertos at St. James's, said he could not give them their proper effect unless Handel accompanied on the harpsichord. Handel was at once told that he might present himself for that purpose, so he went and apologised in person for his long absence from Hanover, was graciously received, and before he departed had been promised a pension of £200 a year in addition to the one which he still enjoyed from the late Queen Anne.

This, then, was the origin of Handel's famous *Water Musick*, which was too charming not to be repeated. In July, 1717, the Royal Family were invited by Lady Catherine Jones to a supper party at Lord Ranelagh's house at Chelsea, and as the pleasantest way of going there was by water, Baron Kielmansegge arranged that fifty performers should be seated in an open barge, and, conducted by Handel, should play as they followed the Royal party up the river. The King was so much pleased that he ordered the entire composition to be three times repeated.

Soon afterwards George I. went back to Hamburg for a few months, and took Handel with him. While there he composed and executed a Passion oratorio

for the principal church, which was the last music he ever wrote to German words.

He paid a visit to Anspach, most likely for the purpose of renewing his friendship with an old college chum, John Christopher Schmidt, who returned with him to England, and became his treasurer and secretary, an office in which his son ultimately succeeded him.

CHAPTER VI.

IN LONDON.

FOR three years after the close of the Opera season in 1717 no more lyric dramas were performed at the King's Theatre, and though Handel still enjoyed his royal pensions, and a further sum of £200 a year from the Princess Caroline as musical instructor to her daughters, he was not sorry to accept an engagement in the household of the Duke of Chandos.

This nobleman had been Paymaster of the British Forces under the Duke of Marlborough, and amassed an immense fortune. On retiring from active service at the conclusion of the peace of Utrecht, he built himself a magnificent mansion at Cannons near Edgware, where he had a private chapel, and maintained for it a choir and a band of instrumental

performers, after the fashion of a music-loving German prince. This chapel is now the parish church of Whitchurch, but the mansion has long since been razed to the ground, its magnificent marble staircase having been removed to Chesterfield House, Mayfair, the marble columns of the hall to the portico of Wanstead House, and the statue of George I. to Leicester Square.

The Duke's first musical director was Dr. Pepusch, who was succeeded by Handel in 1718. His compositions for the anthems or choral cantatas used in the chapel are but little remembered, though Arnold published twelve of them in 1789, and the German Handel Society has reprinted them.

Handel's residence at Cannons is chiefly marked by the production of the first of those English oratorios on which his great fame rests. This was *Esther*, for which Pope is said to have written the words. It was first performed on the 20th of August, 1720, and the Duke, in the fulness of his delight, presented Handel with a thousand pounds. A little later he composed the pastoral *Acis and Galatea*, the poem being furnished by Gay, with some small additions by Pope and Hughes.

The Harmonious Blacksmith also dates from this time, and tradition says that Handel, while walking home to Cannons, through the village o. Edgware, was caught in a sudden storm, and took refuge in

a smithy, where the blacksmith was singing as he worked, and beating time to his tune by the blows on the anvil. He afterwards wrote down the air the blacksmith sang, and made variations on it, and thus this particular anvil and hammer came to be regarded as relics.

It is said that the blacksmith belonged to a very musical family, but it is also said that Handel adapted the melody from an old French song, but nothing certain is known. Tradition, however, even if unsupported by circumstantial evidence is often trustworthy, and unless the anvil of the Edgware blacksmith had had some authentic connection with Handel's composition, it is most unlikely that it would have been handed on from one generation to another, and finally sold as a curiosity.

The Royal Academy of Music was founded in 1720, and was a company formed to encourage the performance of Italian Opera at the King's Theatre. George I. took the scheme under his protection, subscribed £1,000 to its funds, and arranged that the Lord Chancellor for the time being should always be its Governor. The shareholders were annually to elect a Deputy Governor and twenty directors.

The first Governor in his official capacity as Lord Chancellor was the Duke of Newcastle, and the first Deputy was Lord Bingley, while the directors were men of rank and position. Two

poets were also appointed, Nicola Haym, and Paolo Rolli, and as it was not supposed that the writing of poetry would occupy all their time, they were also to act as Italian secretaries. Heidegger, a Swiss then well known in London, undertook to be stage manager, and the capital was £50,000, in five hundred shares of £100 each. Every shareholder was to be entitled to a seat at each performance, and as the theatre accommodated a thousand spectators, there were five hundred seats left for the paying public. To undertake the supreme management, and as principal composer, Handel left the service of the Duke of Chandos, and with him were associated in the latter capacity, Giovanni Battista Buononcini, his enemy, and Attilio Ariosti, his staunch and valued friend.

Of course the project had been talked about for some time previously, for early in the spring of 1719, Handel had been sent abroad by the directors for the purpose of getting together a good band of professional singers. He was very successful, for Italians were quite eager to be engaged, and the two principal ones he chose were Bernardi, usually called Senesino, a famous artificial soprano, then at Dresden, while Signora Durastanti accepted the position of Prima Donna.

At Dresden the great musician played on the harpsichord before Augustus, the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, and the Crown Prince, and so

highly did the first named appreciate the pleasure that he presented him with a hundred ducats.

Sebastian Bach was at that time Kapellmeister to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Koethen, and would have given anything to have heard his brother musician at Dresden, but as the news of his visit there did not reach him till too late, he started off to Halle where Handel was staying with his bereaved mother and brother-in-law, Dr. Michaelsen, who were mourning the loss of Dorothea, who had died of consumption just when life, as the cherished wife of a good husband, and mother of a sweet little girl, looked full of happiness. Unfortunately Bach did not get to Halle till the very day after Handel had departed on his journey back to England. These two great composers, who flourished contemporaneously for sixty-five years, were never destined to meet.

Handel, who now began always to sign his initials G. F., instead of his plain name, managed all his business in time to arrange that the Royal Academy should open its theatre on April 2nd, 1720, with an old opera that served as prelude to his *Radamisto*, which would have been first performed on the 26th had not the Royal Family commanded its postponement to the following night, that they might all be present. The new singers had not arrived, so Mrs. Robinson took the principal part; but the audience was in a mood to idolise the composer. Every seat was filled, and in the struggle for ad-

mission ladies had their dresses torn to pieces, and were carried away fainting from the pressure of the crowd. Money was not only refused, but returned, and those who were fortunate enough to get inside were as excitable as the theatre-goers of Venice when they first greeted the "dear Saxon" in 1708. *Radamisto* continued to be the great attraction till the end of May, and the King's Theatre was closed for the season during the last week in June.

John Christopher Schmidt now saw that Handel was in a position which would give him constant employment as amanuensis and treasurer, and therefore felt justified in bringing his wife and children over from Anspach. Their eldest boy was then eight years old, and was at once sent to Mr. Clare's Academy in Soho Square. Handel was very fond of the little fellow, and when he found, in 1725, that he had a great talent for music, removed him from school, himself grounded him in the science of the art, and then arranged for him to study under Dr. Pepusch and Thomas Roseingrove.

Of course Buononcini and Ariosti took their turns in composing operas, though without any great success, and at last the directors of the Royal Academy took it into their heads that the three composers should each write an act of a new opera; so the libretto or poem of *Muzio Scevola* was prepared, and Ariosti undertook the first act, Buononcini the second, and Handel the third, each being opened by an

overture and ended with a chorus, so that it might if necessary form a complete work. Handel's act was wonderfully superior to the other two, but it would not have been worth noticing here had not this opera had a very disastrous effect on the Academy.

Handel's overture was remarkably fine, but there are always people ready to find fault, and a self-constituted critic who objected to a certain semitone mentioned it to Geminiani, who, though obliged to own that the use of a semitone in that place was technically incorrect, showed his enthusiasm for his friend by exclaiming, "But that semitone is worth a world!"

Handel's next important opera was *Ottone*, in which he wrote a beautiful Aria, *Falsa Immagine*, expressly for Signora Francesca Cuzzoni, whom he had just engaged. Her one good point was her lovely voice, for she was a short plain woman with a very bad temper, and an extremely small amount of sense or taste. She would have been a terrible plague to any one who did not know how to manage her, but in Handel she met her master.

At the first rehearsal she flatly refused to sing her song, and Handel, seeing the kind of woman he had to deal with, said, "I know, madam, that you are a very demon; but I will let you see that I am Beelzebub, the prince of the demons!" He seized her in his strong arms, carried her to the window,

and declared he would throw her out. She saw it was no use trying his temper any further, so she meekly sang the song exactly as he wished, and by so doing achieved one of her greatest triumphs. She thenceforth allowed herself to be guided by him, and took the musical world by storm, while the Royal Academy gave her £2,000 a year. So delighted was the public with *Ottone* that on the second night the seats were sold for five guineas each, and it was succeeded by Handel's *Flavio*, in which Signoras Cuzzoni and Durastanti with Mrs. Robinson, and Senesino, as Bernardi was usually called, distinguished themselves more than ever.

The next great triumph of composer and singer was in the opera of *Rodelinda*, which came out in February, 1725. Cuzzoni was the heroine, and wore a brown silk dress trimmed with silver, which took everyone's fancy so much that it set the fashion of the season. Her singing was pronounced divine, and Senesino also won great applause by his singing of *Dove Sei, Amato Bene*, which is now familiar to us as "Holy, holy!"

The Academy closed its doors on the 19th of May, and Handel, whose affections were very warm, was anxious to go home to Halle and see his aged mother once more. He was, however, unable to leave England, but he wrote gratefully about Frau Dorothea to Dr. Michaelsen, who by this time had married again. He says—

"*June* 11*th*, 1725.

"SIR, AND MOST HONOURED BROTHER,—Again I find myself very much to blame for not having performed my duty towards you, with regard to my letters, for so long a time; nevertheless I do not despair of obtaining your generous pardon, when I assure you that my silence does not proceed from forgetfulness, and that my esteem and friendship for you are inviolable, as you must have already remarked, my honoured brother, from the letters I have written to my mother.

"My silence, indeed, has proceeded rather from a fear lest I weary you with a correspondence which you might find troublesome. But that which leads me to disregard these reflections in worrying you with my present letter is that I cannot be so ungrateful as to pass over in silence the goodness you have shown to my mother in her advanced age, for which I offer you my very humble thanks. You know how deeply I am interested in all that concerns her, and can therefore judge the depth of the obligation under which you have placed me.

"I should esteem myself happy, my very dear brother, if I could engage you to send me some news from time to time; and you may depend upon my sincerity and good faith in reply. I had hoped to be able to renew my friendship by word of mouth, and to visit your neighbourhood on the occasion of the King's visit to Hanover; but I cannot yet put my

wishes into effect. However, though the position of my affairs deprives me for the present of the pleasure I have so long coveted, I do not despair of enjoying this happiness some day; and in the meantime it would be a great consolation to me if I could flatter myself that you would think of me sometimes, and still honour me with your friendship, since I shall never cease to be, with devoted affection and attachment,

"Sir, and most honoured Brother,

"Your very humble and obedient servant,

"George Frideric Handel.

"I send my very humble respects to madame, your wife, and I embrace tenderly my dear god-daughter, and the rest of your dear family. My compliments, if you please, to all my friends."

Is not this a grateful and warm-hearted letter? And yet Handel's opponents used to say that he was morose, and had no warm affections. Perhaps most old bachelors bear that character, but it is not always true by any means. There was one remarkable thing about Handel, and that was his courtesy and politeness. Hasty though he often was, he always addressed and wrote of people by their proper names. Even when he wrote on a score the names of those for whom the parts were intended he never put "Jones," or "Brown," but invariably "Mr. Jones, Mr. Brown," &c. This is a habit we should do well to

copy, for small civilities oil the wheels of life and make them roll as smoothly again as they do when such trifles are disregarded.

The Grenadier Guards say that a parade slow march, which they still frequently play and are very proud of, was composed specially for them by Handel about this time. In March, 1726, it came before the public as the Triumphal March opening the first act of the opera of *Scipione*, and was speedily popular all over England; but the Guards adhere to their story, and declare that they have the first claim on that splendid composition.

In the same winter Handel became a naturalised Englishman, and took, as was then necessary, the Oath of Allegiance in the House of Lords. This opened the way for one or two more appointments, as the King at once gave him the offices of Composer to the Chapels Royal and to the Court, which could only be held by a British subject, and, though they were unsalaried, gave him a good position in the Royal Household.

It was at this time that Handel took up his residence at 25, Brook Street, the house he occupied till his death, and on which a tablet may now be seen with an inscription to that effect. It was very central and suitable for him, and, the modern mania for continual moving not having then set in, it is probable that he found himself among pretty much the same set of neighbours as long as he lived.

Handel undertook a very difficult piece of business in 1726, when he secured Signora Faustina Bordoni, a young singer of European reputation, who was in every respect, except the beauty of her voice, the exact opposite of Cuzzoni. She was pretty, graceful and intelligent, and amiable to a degree. Her voice was clear, sweet, and flexible, and she had a native warbling way of singing; Dr. Burney even said that she "invented a new kind of singing, by running divisions with a neatness and velocity that entranced all who heard her." Everything was to be quite equal between her and Cuzzoni, and Handel in writing his opera of *Alessandro* gave them song for song. Each of them sang a duet with Senesino, and when they sang one together he managed to give each the upper part by turns, so that no one could know who was singing first and who second.

This opera was a splendid success to all but the Company of the Royal Academy, who had never made any profit out of the high prices obtained for seats, because they were all bought up at the regular price by speculators who charged according to the demand and pocketed a large amount of interest, pretty much as is now done in America. Moreover, the expenses of the Academy had always been larger than their receipts, and ruin began to stare them in the face.

The rivalry between Faustina and Cuzzoni became a matter of public notoriety, and great ladies were

foolish enough to be violent partisans of one or the other, and could not say anything unkind enough of the one who did not happen to be their favourite. Cuzzoni's cause was espoused by Lady Pembroke, Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Sir William Gage, and Mr. Simon Smith; while Faustina rejoiced in the support of several of her own sex, including Lady Burlington, Lady Cowper, Lady Delaware, and Sir Robert and Lady Walpole. Their programme was that while the friends of one singer applauded at the Theatre, those of the other hissed, and the unseemliness of the effect may be imagined. Lady Walpole alone never condescended to hiss, and on Sundays, when her husband was away, she used to invite both ladies to dinner and endeavour to keep peace between them. One evening, however, when she had a great many distinguished guests she found her task more than usually difficult, for her friends expected to hear them sing and neither would allow the other to sing first. Fortunately Lady Walpole always had some treasures to show, so she took Faustina away to look at her rare old china, and Cuzzoni thinking she had taken her departure sang song after song. When she had finished, the hostess again appeared on the scene, and taking Cuzzoni on a similar visit of inspection gave the company the opportunity of hearing Faustina.

Both *artistes*, however, practised diligently under Handel, and as neither wished her rival to excel her the public had the benefit of the best efforts of both.

In the following year Handel produced his *Ammeto*, which contained very lovely airs for both these ladies, and it was while Cuzzoni was singing "*Sen vola*" that some one called out from the gallery that she had "a nest of nightingales in her bosom." Things, however, did not go any more smoothly, and on the last night of the season, when one of Buononcini's operas was going on, the hisses, yells, and catcalls of the rival parties produced such a hubbub that the voices of the singers were quite drowned, and though one of the Princesses was present, the scene was simply disgraceful.

When the next season came round it opened with *Ammeto*, which was speedily superseded by Handel's *Riccardo Primo, Re d'Inghilterra*, in which he had again arranged the songs for Cuzzoni and Faustina so that one had just as much opportunity of display as the other, and those for Senesino were so difficult that they were feats of skill and agility in voice-management. The public enjoyed it to a certain extent, but the absurd tumults and rivalries between the *prime donne* and their foolish partisans, made respectable people feel too much disgusted to go to the theatre, and those who had caused the disturbances could not in any way make up to the directors for the loss thus incurred. In vain Handel strained every nerve to attract supporters, bringing out *Siroe* in February, and *Tolomeo* at the end of April, in which the lovely Echo Song, "*Dites che fà?*" was enough to charm any

audience. Cuzzoni sang each phrase of it on the stage, and Senesino repeated them behind the scenes with the most beautiful effect.

But the mischief was done, for Mr. Rich had in January opened a little theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and there produced the *Beggar's Opera*, by Gay, which was not only full of songs set to well-known English airs by Dr. Pepusch, but was in reality a satire on many existing evils and abuses. Miss Fenton, who as we say now "created" the part of Polly Peachum, made a matrimonial conquest and became the Duchess of Bolton, and that is a sort of thing that always delights the crowd. The piece ran for sixty nights, and Gay thought he could not do better than follow it up by a second called *Polly*, on which, however, the Lord Chamberlain speedily put his veto. Foolish Lady Queensberry then persuaded him to publish it, and insisted that everybody she knew should buy a copy. So far did she carry it that the King actually forbade her to appear at Court.

Still night after night all the world flocked to see the *Beggar's Opera*, and this rival attraction completed the downfall of the King's Theatre.

The Company had raised every penny of its £50,000, and no more money was forthcoming, so the Royal Academy of Music came to an end, and the artists were dispersed. Faustina and Senesino went to Venice, and so did Cuzzoni, Boschi, Nicolini, and Farinelli, where they sang at different theatres.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW KING.

IN tracing Handel's career we must now go back a little to the last days of King George I. This monarch never liked England very well, and was always glad to escape back to Hanover for a time. He remained very ignorant of our language, and many stories are told of the mistakes he made in consequence.

On one of his birthdays, a son of the Prince of Wales, Prince William, was taken to wish his Royal grandfather many happy returns of the day, and the old man asked him what time he got up in the morning.

"When the chimney sweepers go about," said the child.

"Vat, vat is de chimney sweep?" asked the King.

"Have you been so long in England," said the little fellow, "and don't know what chimney sweepers are?"

He looked round for something or someone to help him in making his grandfather understand, and as Lord Finch was standing by, who had a very dark skin and very black hair and whiskers, he added—

"Why, chimney sweeps are like that man there."

The King was not much the wiser, but everybody else thought the child's speech was capital fun.

But though there were many things the English as a nation did not care about in their German sovereign, he had other qualities which claimed their respect. He first established Professorships of modern history in our universities, endowing them with £400 a year each; he had twenty-four preachers chosen from Oxford and Cambridge to officiate alternately at Whitehall; and he gave six thousand guineas for the Bishop of Ely's library, which he bestowed on the University of Cambridge.

George I. appeared to have no affection for his son or for his good wife, Caroline of Anspach, but when he started on his last journey to Hanover, he melted into tears on taking leave of them, saying that he should never see them again, and he was quite right, for he died suddenly at Osnaburg, early in June, 1727. His successor, George II., was quite as friendly to Handel as his father had been, and lost no time in confirming his various appointments, and formally instituting him as Music Master to his daughters. Handel had virtually been this for some time, but the Princess had paid him out of her private purse, and now the post assumed a more official form. The musician's first duty was to compose an anthem for the Coronation in Westminster Abbey, which took place on October 11th, 1727. In

reality there were four separate ones, for after the Act of Homage, there was a flourish of trumpets, and *The King shall Rejoice*, was sung. *Zadok the Priest*, now the best known of these anthems, was performed after the King had taken the Coronation Oath, and *My Heart is Inditing*, at the end of the ceremony. There was a fourth anthem, *Let thy Deeds be Glorious*, but where it came in is not known.

It is said that some of the bishops incurred Handel's wrath by sending him the words for these anthems, whereupon he retorted, "I have read my Bible very well, and shall choose for myself."

Handel of course was very much annoyed by the fall of the Academy, but he had great faith in his own powers, and was no doubt aware that the Directors of the Company, though lovers of art, had been anything but business men. He therefore secured the King's Theatre, and entering into partnership with Heidegger, the former stage manager, he started once more for Italy to engage singers. The good old Abbate Steffani accompanied him, and they went from city to city, everywhere welcomed and honoured, and made choice of some admirable artists of both sexes.

The troupe they got together included Antonio Bernacchi, called in Italy the king of vocalists, Annibale Pio Fabri, who was thought the best tenor singer of the age, his wife, Signora Fabri, Signora Strada, an admirable *prima donna*, with Merighi and

Bertolli as contraltos, and Riemschneider of Hamburg as a baritone.

All through his life, Handel put business first and pleasure after; and in this way arranged to go first to Italy and engage his singers, and return by way of Halle to see his mother and relations. Perhaps on this occasion he afterwards wished he had gone to his old home first, but he acted for the best, and no one can do more. When he reached Venice, which was almost the extreme point of his journey, he wrote the following letter to Dr. Michaelsen :—

"*Venice, March 11th*, 1729.

"SIR, AND MOST HONOURED BROTHER,—You will find from the letter which I herewith send to my mother, that I am honoured with the receipt of yours, dated the 18th of last month.

"Permit me, in these few lines, to offer you my best thanks, and to beg you kindly to send me your welcome news from time to time, while I am travelling in this country, since you cannot be ignorant of the interest and satisfaction it affords me. You have only to address your letters to Mr. Joseph Smith, Banker, at Venice (as I have already explained), and he will forward them to me, in whatever part of Italy I may be staying. You may well imagine, my most honoured brother, the satisfaction with which I learn that you and your dear family are in good health; and I trust, with all my heart, that

you may continue so. You will do me the justice to believe that the thought of so soon embracing you gives me real gratification. I assure you that this was one of the chief motives which led me to undertake this journey with so much pleasure. I hope my wishes may be accomplished towards the month of July next. In the meantime I wish you every prosperity ; and making my best compliments to madame, your wife, and embracing your dear family,

"I am, with devoted affection,

"Sir, and most honoured Brother,

"Your very humble and obedient servant,

"George Frideric Handel."

In reply to this letter Dr. Michaelsen wrote word to his brother-in-law that the good old mother, Frau Dorothea, was stricken with paralysis, but by the time he had finished his business, and was able to go to Halle, he found her so far recovered that she could walk with her stick from room to room, though her sight was quite gone. It must have been a trial to her not to be able to see him, but perhaps the nature of her illness and the pressure of seventy-nine years may have left her only conscious of his presence and the touch of his hand, and the tender care with which he endeavoured to smooth her path during that short visit.

While Handel was at Halle, John Sebastian Bach,

who was very ill, wrote to beg him to go and see him at Leipzig, but he felt it impossible to leave his mother during the little time he had at his disposal, and once more was obliged to forego the pleasure of seeing his brother musician.

The new company reached London in the autumn of 1729, and the Theatre was opened on the 2nd of December, with the new opera of *Lotario*, written by Handel for the occasion, probably with many interruptions, for the management of his enterprise gave him much anxiety, and occupied a great deal of his time. He was, however, encouraged when the season closed in June by seeing the probability of a fair amount of success. For the following season he engaged Senesino for 1,400 guineas, and as he was a very great favourite in London, this was a wise proceeding.

In December, 1731, Frau Dorothea died, when nearly eighty years of age, and though her gifted son had known that he was hardly likely to see her again, the blow seems to have affected him deeply. Although Dr. Michaelsen had married a second time, he always did the duty of an affectionate son by the old lady, and Handel was very grateful. In reply to the letters announcing her death and burial in the family vault, where her husband lay, he wrote to this kind brother-in-law, the warmth of his true feelings showing itself clearly over and above the stilted phraseology of the day.

"*London, February* $\frac{23}{12}$, 1731.

"Sir, and most honoured Brother,—I have duly received your honoured letter of the 6th of January, and learned from it the care you have taken to commit the remains of my late mother to the earth conformably to her will. I cannot yet restrain my tears. But it has pleased the Most High to enable me to submit with Christian calmness to His holy will. Your thoughtfulness will never pass from my remembrance until, after this life, we are once more united, which may the All Good God in His mercy grant us.

"The innumerable obligations, under which my honoured brother has laid me, by the continued solicitude and care with which he has always tended my late dear mother, cannot be acknowledged with words alone, but with dutiful recognition.

"I hope my honoured brother received my last letter, written in answer to his own of the 28th of December, with the enclosure for Herr Consistorial Rath Franck, and my cousin, Deacon Taust. I also expect with impatience his honoured answer, including notice of expenses incurred, and also the printed funeral oration and verses. I am greatly obliged for the poem last sent to me, and shall guard it as a treasured memorial.

"Let me also in the last place condole most heartily with my honoured brother and his wife, on the loss

they have sustained in the death of their brother-in-law. Their Christian calmness strengthens me much. May the Most High grant to all of us our faithful desires. To His Almighty keeping I recommend my honoured brother, and all his amiable family, and remain with earnest devotion, my honoured brother's most humble and obedient servant,

"GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL."

During the following year Handel worked away at several operas, the best of which was called *Sosarme*, one song in it being still well-known. It was written for Signora Strada as *Rend' il Sereno al Ciglio*, but we are acquainted with it as *Lord, Remember David*, and have forgotten, or perhaps never known that it once figured in an opera. It was not, indeed, by his operas that the great musician's fame was to be handed down to future generations, and troubles were coming upon him in his theatrical connection which led to his preparing other works, by which he is now chiefly remembered.

On February 23rd, 1732, Handel was forty-seven, and by way of celebrating the anniversary, the choristers of the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey gave a private performance of *Esther*, his first English oratorio, at the house of Mr. Bernard Gates, who lived in James Street, Westminster. It was acted as well as sung, and the young performers wore

suitable dresses, and had the advantage of scenery which Heidegger and Handel probably lent from the Theatre. Those who had the privilege of being invited enjoyed the performance so much that it was twice repeated at the "Academy of Antient Musick," then held at the "Crown and Anchor," in the Strand. On one of these evenings Handel was present himself, and was so delighted with the manner in which the boys performed and sang their parts that he described it in glowing terms to the Princess Royal. She very naturally thought she should like to see and hear *Esther*, and proposed that the boys should produce it again at the Opera House. But even a Princess cannot always have her own way, and she was overruled by the Bishop of London, who considered he had a right to dictate where and how the choristers should or should not sing. If they must needs sing at the Opera, he insisted that they should not be in costume, and even though some one suggested that they might qualify their dresses by holding books in their hands, the Bishop was firm — the boys might dress, sing, and act into the bargain at a private house or concert room, but not on the stage. This decision had more effect on Handel's future fortunes than could possibly have been imagined.

It now entered the head of a clever Londoner that choristers were not the only people who could sing, and that he might make some money out of

the popular taste. The music of *Esther* had been published long ago, so he got together a company of singers and advertised that the oratorio would be performed on April 20th at the great room in Villar's Street, York Buildings, the tickets being five shillings each. Handel could not sit down tamely under this impertinent piracy of his work, so by the advice of his friends and the support of the Royal Family, he added several new melodies and songs to *Esther*, had it carefully studied and rehearsed in English by the whole of the Opera Company, and announced that, "By His Majesty's command," *Esther* would be performed by a large number of voices and instruments on the 2nd of May at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. In deference to popular feeling Handel added the following sentences to his advertisement and bills :—

"N.B.—There will be no acting on the stage, but the house will be fitted up in a decent manner for the audience. The Musick to be disposed after the manner of the Coronation Service. Tickets to be delivered at the usual prices."

When the long looked-for evening came, all the Royal Family were present, and the house was densely packed. Many who had tickets could not get in, so the performance was repeated six times to the great delight of the public. The success of *Esther* induced Mr. Arne, the father of the celebrated composer, who was the lessee of what was

called the "New" or the "Little" Theatre in the Haymarket, almost opposite the King's Theatre, to pirate *Acis and Galatea.* His distribution of parts was curious. *Galatea* was undertaken by Miss Arne, afterwards the wife of Colley Cibber; *Acis*, by Mr. Mountier, a promising young tenor; *Damon*, by Mrs. Mason; and that of *Polyphemus* was given to a man named Waltz, who had once been Handel's cook. This was injurious as well as insulting; but Handel redoubled his efforts and produced it himself so superbly, with scenery, but without action, and continually introducing new airs, that the interference with his rights was dropped, and he became convinced that the public preferred his great choral works to his operas.

Still, he wrote another opera entitled *Orlando*, which he brought out at the close of 1732, which contained the last songs he ever wrote for Senesino, perhaps not suspecting how soon that vocalist would turn traitor. Buononcini, always Handel's rival, had found a warm, but injudicious, patroness in the Duchess of Marlborough, daughter of the first Duke, who died without male heirs. This lady, who was fabulously rich, ostentatiously showed her favour by allowing him £500 a year, taking him to live in her own house in St. James's, giving concerts in which no music but his was performed, and pushing his interests wherever she could in opposition to Handel's. Of course the Duchess had her friends

and followers, and when Senesino shook off his allegiance to Handel, he worked with Buononcini, whose patrons established a rival Opera at the Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and persuading all the best singers of Handel and Heidegger's company to join them, plunged the partners into difficulties from which they were unable to extricate themselves.

Handel had most likely brought this state of things on himself by his hasty impetuous temper, for though a kind-hearted man and generous enough to acknowledge any real mistakes when he discovered them, he had a very high-handed way of dealing with his singers and musicians, which they, of course, took offence at, and he was also fond of saying sharp things, which were repeated from mouth to mouth and lost nothing in the telling. The way in which he behaved to Corelli in his youth at Rome, and managed the refractory Cuzzoni in London, show his temper, and many people resent that kind of treatment as long as they live. Cuzzoni, doubtless, did so, for she joined the new company, and Signora Strada was the only one of Handel's "stars" who remained faithful to him.

The rivalry between Handel and Buononcini gave rise to an epigram written by a Mr. John Byrom, the last two lines of which are better known and have been more frequently quoted than the others :—

"Some say, compared to Buononcini,
That Mynheer Handel's but a ninny;
Others aver that he to Handel
Is scarcely fit to hold a candle.
Strange all this difference should be
'Twixt tweedledum and tweedledee."

Posterity has long ago discovered which of the two musicians was the genius, and indeed Buononcini's name would hardly be remembered now but for his strife with Handel.

Annoyances and worries did not prevent Handel from writing an oratorio for the Lent of 1733, which was entitled *Deborah.* The King, Queen, and three eldest Princesses were present at the first performance, and the price of tickets was half a guinea even for the gallery, and more in proportion for better places. This was not at all liked, and prevented the oratorio from being as warmly received as it deserved. In a few months the Duchess of Marlborough died, and Buononcini ruined himself completely by introducing a madrigal as his own, which he had simply copied from one by an Italian musician named Lotti. He thought it would never be found out, but the "Academy of Antient Musick" sifted the matter thoroughly and discussed the imposture.

Dr. Greene, who was one of the most stirring members of that body, was very angry, and threw up all connection with it, and as there was then a noted tavern near Temple Bar named after his Satanic majesty, which contained a large room suit-

able for concerts, he took it and gave several entertainments.

Buononcini's departure did not, however, prevent the "Opera of the Nobility," as it was called, from opening at the end of December, and though Handel introduced a splendid contralto singer named Carestini, whose voice was considered the richest and best in Europe, it was of little avail, for his contract with Heidegger for the King's Theatre expired in July, 1734, when the rival company secured it for themselves, and, having engaged the magnificent soprano singer, Farinelli, considered their triumph complete.

We do not know exactly when or how Handel came to be on matrimonial thoughts intent during his career in England, but it is said that he twice contemplated taking a partner for life. In the first instance the lady's mother made such violent opposition to the match that he at once withdrew, and in the second the fair one herself insisted that if he married her he must give up his profession. Music was the very life of his soul, and as not even the richest and sweetest of wives could have compensated him for ceasing to follow where the "heavenly maid" led, he gave up all idea of wedded happiness.

CHAPTER VIII.

HANDEL AT COVENT GARDEN.

HANDEL was a fine, tall, portly man, and some say that his countenance was placid and benign, while others call it full of fire and dignity, though marred by a sour, heavy expression. His portraits, however, of which there are many, show plenty of fire and dignity, with a bright impetuous look, but there is no trace of placidity or calm. He walked with rather a rolling gait, and talked in a mixture of four languages, German, French, Italian, and English, though he could speak each correctly on occasion. He had a great deal of wit and dry humour, and enjoyed a joke immensely. It was the custom of the day to season all speech very freely with oaths, and Handel did it quite as much as any one else, but it must not be forgotten that no more importance was then attached to such language than is now to the words "awful," "bother," and many others which are very commonly used, though the habit can no more be defended than the worse and coarser ones that prevailed in Handel's time.

By the time our musician reached middle age he had acquired the reputation of being a very great

eater, a peculiarity shared by many Germans, the truth probably being that men whose frames are large have by nature appetites to correspond.

Handel one day ordered dinner for three at an inn, but as it was not served as quickly as he expected he asked the reason why he was kept so long waiting. The host replied that they were waiting for the other two guests, "the company," to arrive. "Then bring up the dinner *prestissimo*," said Handel, "I am the company."

A story that has often been told of him, and not considered altogether to his credit, has probably been misunderstood. Germans, although fond of their national beer, which is very much lighter than the ales usually brewed in England, prefer the light wines of their own country to the strong port and sherry which used to be the usual drink at dinners in England. Of late years claret, Burgundy, hock, and other continental wines, have to a great extent superseded them, but in Handel's time it was not so.

Lord Radnor once sent him a case of Burgundy, which he very much enjoyed and kept to himself, partly because it suited him, and partly because he knew that his companions would not particularly care for it. During the oratorio season he frequently asked the principal performers to dine with him at his house in Brook Street, and Mr. Brown, the leader of His Majesty's band, was usually among the guests. They

were quite accustomed to their host's leaving the table and going into another room to write down any musical ideas that struck him, and always begged him not to consider them in the slightest, as the world could not afford to lose any of his tuneful imaginings. On one occasion the table was bountifully spread, and there were Spanish wines in abundance. As the meal went on Handel frequently exclaimed, "Oh, I have the thought," and as frequently retired to an adjoining room. This occurred oftener than seemed quite natural, and at last some one was so curious as to get up and peep through the keyhole. He then saw that the host did not leave his friends for the purpose of jotting down his ideas, but to sip some of Lord Radnor's Burgundy, and as it was thought a good joke by them all, the story was repeated and exaggerated and made more of than was at all necessary.

It was in December, 1734, that Handel took Covent Garden Theatre, which had been built only two years previously, on lease from Mr. Rich, and here within about three years he produced six new operas, besides reviving many of his earlier works, and substituting oratorios during Lent. In the second of these operas, *Alcina*, he wrote *Verdi prati*, especially to show off the beauty of Carestini's voice. The contralto, however, did not like it at first, and positively refused to sing it. This roused the maestro's temper, and he exclaimed, "You dog! Don't I know

better as yourself what is good for you to sing? If you will not sing all the songs what I give you, I will not pay you ein stiver."

This reasoning brought Carestini to his senses, and that very song proved one of his greatest successes, for he never sang it without the warmest applause, and it was invariably encored. In all these six operas Signora Strada, who under Handel's tuition had become a magnificent singer, was the *prima donna*, and she equally distinguished herself in the oratorios. The latter were so much admired that the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford on one occasion requested Handel to bring his company down and perform them in the local theatre, which he did with great pleasure, giving *Esther, Deborah, Acis and Galatea*, and a new one called *Athaliah*. Such a novel proceeding was not approved of by many of the Oxford Dons, and a great many unkind things were said of the Vice-Chancellor for introducing it. Even Handel and the singers were not spared, and very angry they were in consequence. A doctor's degree was offered to Handel, but he was not inclined to go to the expense of the fees, which would have amounted to at least £100. "Why," said he, "should I throw my money away for that the blockhead wish, I no want."

The famous *Alexander's Feast* also belongs to this period, and is a work generally classed with the oratorios because it was merely Italian words and senti-

ments adapted to the music of *Athaliah*, and so does a Serenata called *Parnasso in Festa*, performed in honour of the marriage between the Prince of Orange and Princess Royal.

The latter was first performed on the eve of the wedding day, all the Royal Family being present, and after the next day's ceremony the choir sang a magnificent anthem by Handel with full orchestral accompaniment. How sorry he was to lose so constant a friend as his young Royal pupil had always shown herself, may be better imagined than described; and she, knowing a good deal about the difficulties he had to contend with, did not leave England without begging Lord Herisey, who had a good deal of power and influence, to take her former master's part whenever he could.

Handel gained another Royal friend shortly afterwards, when Frederick Prince of Wales married Princess Augusta of Saxe Gotha, and wrote for their wedding on the 27th of April, 1736, the anthem, *Sing unto God, ye Kingdoms of the Earth*, which was performed during the nuptial service in the Chapel Royal. Part and parcel of the wedding festivities, was the State visit of the whole Royal Family to Covent Garden Theatre on the 12th of May, when *Atalanta* was put on the stage with great splendour, having been specially prepared and composed for the occasion.

The rival opera completely broke down in June,

1737, having lost £12,000, and thenceforth Handel at Covent Garden reigned supreme.

Unfortunately the struggle with his opponents had gone far towards ruining him, and, though he had saved £10,000, it all went, and still there were debts unpaid. He offered bills for what he could not pay at the moment, and every one of his creditors accepted them, except Signor del Po, Strada's husband. This tried Handel terribly; his health completely gave way. An attack of paralysis compelled him to give up work for a season, so he went to Aix-la-Chapelle, drank the waters with great benefit during the summer and autumn, and came back to London, partly restored, in November.

A fortnight afterwards Queen Caroline died, to the great grief of her husband, and all who knew her, unless it was her eldest son, Frederick, Prince of Wales, who appeared to have no love for any one. She had been very pretty in her youth, and to the last had beautiful eyes, a sweet and pleasant voice, and graceful delicate little hands.

It was she who laid out Kensington Gardens, and Richmond Park, and made the ornamental water in Hyde Park, called the Serpentine, which was previously a number of ponds. The King never interfered in any of these things, remarking that he did not mind what she did with her own money.

Queen Caroline had always been Handel's very

generous patron, and he felt her loss deeply, and may be said to have set his feelings and those of the whole nation to music, in the funeral anthem he composed—*The Ways of Sion do Mourn*—the opening part of which was founded on the hymn usually sung at burials throughout Saxony. Of course, there was a period of public mourning, and the theatres were closed for that winter, much to the regret of Heidegger, who had again leased the King's Theatre, vacated by the downfall of the "Opera of the Nobility." Handel, instead of taking Covent Garden, returned to his old partner, and the scene of so many triumphs, by producing his opera, of *Faramando*, on the 7th of January, 1738, and in April his *Serse* came out, which was a comic opera, quite a new venture for the serious minded composer, and one which he never repeated. The truth was that he was obliged to invent some novelty to attract the public, and if possible to make money, for his debts were still unpaid, and Signor del Po pressed him cruelly, refusing to believe that all would be paid in time, and threatening him with a debtor's prison unless that particular sum of money were at once forthcoming.

Handel's friends urged him to accept a benefit, and though it went very much against the grain, he did so, and a concert was organised at the King's Theatre with the greatest success, the house being crowded from floor to roof with five hundred well known people of rank and fashion on the stage. The profits

amounted to about £1,500, so Del Po was paid, and Handel once more breathed freely.

The next event in his life was such an honour as seldom falls to any one's lot. This was the erection of the famous statue of Handel, by Roubiliac, a rising young sculptor, who had been commissioned to do it by the proprietor of the Vauxhall Gardens, where Handel's music was almost nightly performed to large audiences who paid very high prices for the privilege of hearing it, at what was then a new and very fashionable resort.

This statue remained at Vauxhall till 1818, when the gardens were sold, and it has since passed through many hands.

But poor Heidegger could no longer struggle on with the theatre, and being obliged to retire, Handel once more engaged the little theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and there brought out his *Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day*, written to Dryden's words, and followed it up with *Alexander's Feast*. Here also his settings of Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, with a third composition called *Il Moderato*, were first heard, and for this theatre his very last opera *Deidamia* was written. It was on the 10th of February, 1741, that Handel finally bade farewell to the stage, having composed forty two operas in about thirty-five years, to say nothing of oratorios, anthems, concertos, &c. &c.

Handel now devoted himself entirely to sacred

music with English words, and produced *Saul*, in which he appears to have satisfied himself better than usual, and the *Messiah*, the words for both of which were written by Mr. Jennens, a wealthy Leicestershire magnate, who was a man of much taste and culture, and the musician's warm friend. His London house was in Great Ormond Street, where another Leicestershire worthy, Zachary Macaulay, also lived when in town, and as Handel still resided in Brook Street, they were not very far apart.

While writing the *Messiah* Handel was quite lifted out of himself by the sublimity of the theme. His music often affected him deeply, and the valet, who used to take up his morning chocolate, said he often stood silently on one side while his master went on writing rapidly, the tears rolling down his cheeks and wetting the paper.

A friend who called, and was admitted, while he was composing the music for *He was Despised*, found him much affected and sobbing audibly; and when another friend asked him what feelings prompted him to so sublime a composition, he answered,

"I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God himself."

The *Messiah* was, it is generally believed, first performed in Dublin, for in the autumn of 1741 Handel, at the invitation of the Duke of Devonshire, went over to Ireland, and the principal members of

his company followed him. At Chester he was delayed for several days by the weather, which prevented the packets starting as they did then from Parkgate. It was not to be supposed that he could get through this time of weary waiting without trying to find some one to sing his hastily-copied choruses, so he applied to Mr. Baker, the organist of the cathedral, to know whether there were any choristers who could sing at sight. Mr. Baker mentioned several who were highly thought of, especially a printer named Janson, noted for his good bass voice and general knowledge of music.

Chester was at that time a very musical place, where there were weekly concerts and frequent public performances, so considerable interest was taken in the rehearsal at the Golden Falcon, where Handel was staying. When all were assembled, the chorus, *And with His Stripes we are Healed*, was tried, and Janson began and failed, began again and failed so dreadfully that Handel lost all patience, swore at him in several languages, and at last, remembering that the man only understood English, exclaimed, "You scoundrel! did you not tell me you could sing at sight?" "Yes, sir," replied Janson, "and so I can, but not at *first* sight."

Handel reached Dublin on the 18th of November, and took up his abode in Abbey Street, and as soon as his singers arrived, arranged to give his "Musical Entertainments" in the Music Hall, in Fishamble

Street, then newly built. It held about 600 persons, and the tickets were half a guinea each. Here the Lord Lieutenant and his family came night after night to listen to *L'Allegro*, *Esther*, the *Ode*, concertos, and all the organ music Handel chose to play.

The *Messiah* was produced for the very first time at this hall, on the 13th of April, for the benefit of three charitable objects, the relief of the prisoners in the city gaols, and the support of Mercer's Hospital and the infirmary on the Inn's Quay; and a notice was issued requesting ladies to come without their hoops, and gentlemen without their swords, as these omissions would enable the stewards to find seats for seven instead of six hundred persons.

When the new oratorio was performed it fairly took Dublin by storm, the newspapers could not find words in which to express the delight it gave, and every one was charmed except the compiler of the words, Mr. Jennens, who did not think Handel had done himself or his subject justice.

Mrs. Cibber sang the touching air, *He was Despised*, so beautifully that Handel thenceforth wrote most of his contralto parts for her, and the band was led by Dubourg, the violinist who, as a little boy, had played his first solo in the "Small Coal Man's" loft, and had retained Handel's friendship from that evening. This did not prevent the master from having a joke at his expense, for one night during that winter

in Dublin, Dubourg had to play a solo part in a song, and a few bars in which he was at liberty to use his own fancy before coming to a final shake. He wandered about in different keys for some minutes, seeming uncertain of the original one, but when he did find it, and reached the shake, Handel called out in his hearty voice, loud enough to be heard all over the hall, "You are welcome home, Mr. Dubourg!"

But all the same for this, which provoked a general titter, Dubourg and Handel continued on excellent terms, as was testified by the legacy left to the violinist in the master's will.

It was on the 13th of August, 1742, that Handel returned to England after spending nine happy and successful months in Ireland. He also retained pleasant memories of his sojourn there, and he left behind him many warm admirers. He became especially friendly with one amateur musician, for whom he wrote the lesson for the harpsichord we now know under the title of *Forest Music*. Unhappily the original MS. has been lost, though it has been reprinted from copies. This is the only *morceau* he is known to have composed during his visit to Ireland.

So great was the sensation produced when the *Messiah* was performed for the first time, on March 23rd, 1743, at Covent Garden, that when the "Hallelujah Chorus" was reached the King and all the

audience rose at the same moment, and stood thrilled with emotion till it was over, a custom which has been continued ever since wherever it has been performed.

A few days later Lord Kinnoull complimented Handel on his last oratorio, calling it a "noble entertainment for the town."

"My lord," was the answer, "I should be sorry if I only entertained them. I wish to make them better."

The next oratorio was *Samson,* in which *Let the bright Seraphim* was written for Signora Avolio, and was very much liked by the public, though Horace Walpole spoke unkindly and jeeringly of it.

The last battle at which an English king commanded in person was the fight at Dettingen on June 27th, 1743, when George II. met and coped with the French army, gaining so brilliant a victory that he and his braves were received on their return home with the most enthusiastic rejoicing. A day of Public Thanksgiving was appointed, and Handel was commissioned to compose a Te Deum and Anthem, which were publicly rehearsed at the Chapel Royal, Whitehall, two days before the Thanksgiving Service at St. James's, when all the Royal Family were there present.

This seems to have concluded the work of the great composer for that year, and some characteristic

stories are told of the rehearsals and performances before royalty.

Queen Victoria would have delighted Handel, because she is always punctual, but some of her ancestors were sadly deficient in this respect. The Prince and Princess of Wales were sometimes late in making their appearance in the Music-room, and then he grew very cross indeed. The Princess was personally very kind and patient, and when she saw that her maids of honour had talked and giggled till Handel was almost beside himself with anger, used to say to them, "Hush, hush, Handel is in a passion!"

Between Handel's naturally hasty and little controlled temper, and the paralysis which attacked him in middle age, his nerves were excessively irritable, and he could not bear to hear his orchestra tuning their instruments, so they always did it before he was within earshot. One night when the Prince of Wales was expected, and everything was to be in apple-pie order, some mischievous person untuned the instruments and put them back in their places as before. As soon as H. R. H. arrived, Handel gave the signal to begin, but the discord was so horrid that he started up, overthrew a Double Bass, and seizing a Kettle-drum threw it so vigorously at the head of the conductor that his full-bottomed wig fell off with the exertion. He did not stop to pick it up, but advanced to the front of the orchestra, too much choked

with passion to speak. The audience could not help laughing, and of course that made him worse ; but at last the Prince went round, and with much difficulty persuaded him to put on his wig and resume his seat.

This large white wig played quite an important part at the oratorios. When all went well it gave a sort of satisfied shake, but when it was quiet, close observers knew that there was something wrong. The next oratorios were *Joseph and his Brethren* and *Belshazzar*, but they were insignificant compared with *Judas Maccabeus*, the drama of which was written by Dr. Morell, a well known Greek scholar and antiquary. This particularly delighted the Jews of London, who were doubly attracted by the music, of which they were such admirable judges, and by the fact that the new oratorio exalted one of their national heroes, and they thronged Covent Garden night after night during the Lent of 1747.

One of the most striking choruses in this work is *See the Conquering Hero comes.* As soon as it was written Handel played it over to a friend, and asked, "How do you like it?"

"Not so well as most of your music," was the reply.

"No more do I," said Handel; "but you will live to see it a greater favourite with the people than many of my finer things."

And we, nearly a hundred and fifty years afterwards, must acknowledge that he was right.

Joshua, the words for which were written by Dr. Morell, was not a particularly successful oratorio, and some of its music was transferred to *Judas Maccabeus* after a time, but in after years Haydn admired it immensely. Hearing the chorus, *The Nations Tremble*, at one of the concerts of Antient Musick, he told a friend that long as he had been acquainted with music he never knew half its powers till he heard that chorus, and he was perfectly certain that only one inspired author ever did or ever would pen such a sublime composition. How Handel would have enjoyed his appreciation!

Dr. Morell was not always quite satisfied with the music wedded to his words, and one day he said so, to Handel's great disgust.

"What!" he cried, "you teach me music? The music, sir, is good music. It is your words is bad. Hear the passage again. There! go you, make words to that music."

A somewhat similar incident occurred with another person. A singer named Gordon disapproved of Handel's manner of accompanying him, and expressed himself so strongly, that they came to very high words, and Gordon declared that if Handel persisted in playing as he did, he would jump on the harpsichord and break it to pieces.

"Oh, very well," said the musician, "let me know when you will do that, and I will advertise it; for I am sure more people will come to see you jump than to hear you 'sing.'"

Handel made a good deal of money in Ireland, but he soon lost it again in London, for though nothing could hinder his great successes, there were times when he did not offer the public any extraordinary novelty, but trusted to the general goodness of his music to fill Covent Garden, or any other theatre. The remnants of the party who had once supported the rival opera, were still very bitter against him, and insisted on giving dances and card parties on oratorio nights. The result was the frequent emptiness of the Theatre, and once more Handel became bankrupt, but as he was one of the kind of men who never know when they are beaten he went on again almost as full of heart and hope as before.

The heat of party spirit was shown in all sorts of ways, and it is said that one day Mr. John Freke, a well-known surgeon, attached to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, asserted that Dr. Greene, the "organ blower," as Handel styled him, was as great a composer as the "dear Saxon." This was repeated to Hogarth, then in the height of his fame, and who had probably come to know Handel pretty intimately in connection with the Foundling Hospital, to which he also was a benefactor. He was very indignant, and exclaimed—

"That fellow Freke is always shooting his balls at random. Handel is a giant in music; Greene, only a light Florimel kind of composer."

"Ah," said his informant, "but Freke said you were as good a portrait painter as Vandyke."

"There he was right," replied the artist, "and so I am; give me but my time and a good subject."

Hogarth was not the only artist who has been obliged to paint every sitter that offered, and to do it as quickly as possible to keep the pot boiling. His opinion of himself need not be considered conceited, and his recognition of a great man when he saw him, proves that he himself was of the same stamp.

CHAPTER IX.

NATIONAL FESTIVITIES.

THE victory at Dettingen did not end war at once, for the nation had to wait five long years for the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle to be signed, but when it was done on the 7th of October, 1748, their rejoicing knew no bounds. Handel as Composer to the Court was called upon to prepare suitable music to be played in the open air outside St. James's Palace on April 27th, 1749, which was the day appointed for a general holiday. The public were to be delighted

with an extraordinary discharge of cannon, and display of fireworks in the Green Park, where a Doric Temple with two wings was erected about 500 feet from the Royal Library. First of all came the grand overture for wind instruments composed by Handel, which was a great success, and as soon as it was over, a Royal salute from 101 pieces of brass ordnance heralded the fireworks. Unfortunately at this juncture the Doric Temple caught fire; all the able-bodied people in the crowd rushed to the rescue, and it was with difficulty that the Royal Library was saved, so the popular sight-seeing came to an untimely end.

Rich and fashionable people, however, had the opportunity of hearing Handel's music twice rehearsed at Vauxhall Gardens, on the second of which occasions 12,000 persons, who had given 9s. 6d. each for their tickets, were present, and London Bridge was blocked up for three hours by the carriages. The servants in attendance were alone sufficient to form a crowd, and a scuffle took place in which several people were hurt.

The firework score is the only one in which Handel ever included the music for a serpent, a brass instrument of remarkably soft, rich tone, very rarely used, because so few people can play it in tune, though it was invented in France as long ago as 1590.

It is said that Handel never saw or heard one till

he came to England, and did not admire the playing on the first that came under his notice—

"What be that?" he asked with an exclamation of disapproval.

"A new instrument called the serpent," was the reply.

"Oh, the serpent," retorted Handel, "aye, but it not be the serpent what tempted Eve."

The Firework music was performed for the second time for the benefit of the Foundling Hospital, then just established, and of which Handel was a warm-hearted supporter. Captain Coram founded it in 1741, but it soon outgrew the building in Hatton Garden where it was first opened, and the present edifice was erected by subscription in Lamb's Conduit Fields. Handel offered the proceeds of the Firework music towards the funds for finishing the chapel, and in recognition of his liberality was at once enrolled as one of the Governors and Guardians of the Hospital.

The performance took place on the 27th of May in the chapel, and was on a larger scale than was at first proposed; as it included not only the firework overture but the Anthem for the Peace, portions of the oratorio of *Solomon*, and a selection of choruses, &c., suitable for the occasion, taken from many of Handel's works. The Prince and Princess of Wales, with an immense number of the nobility were present, and the money raised by the sale of tickets brought in 500

guineas, while the King sent in £2,000, and an anonymous donor £50.

The third part of the performance is now known as the Foundling Hospital Anthem, and Handel gave a score of it with seventeen pages written with his own hand, and the remainder copied by his friend and amanuensis, Christopher Smith, to the Institution.

Handel now seemed to feel that the Hospital was under his particular care, and had an organ built for it by Parkes, which, though much altered and enlarged, remains to the present time. It had originally three manuals and twenty-one stops. This was Handel's gift to the institution, and he opened it on the 1st of May, 1750, with a performance of the *Messiah*, for the benefit of the charity. There were then no galleries in the chapel, but when the ladies came without hoops and the gentlemen without swords a thousand could be accommodated. This performance produced another 500 guineas, and as not half the people who wished to buy tickets could be supplied with them, it was given again a fortnight afterwards and brought in the same sum.

As long as Handel lived he gave the *Messiah* once a year, for the funds of the Foundling Hospital, and as the receipts rose in proportion to the accommodation, he thus added no less than £6,935 to its revenues.

He also gave the Hospital a complete score of the

Messiah, which he had been so prudent as not to publish, in order to save himself from such piracies as Arne's with *Acis and Galatea*, and other earlier pieces. Of course he reserved the right of repeating the *Messiah* whenever he chose for his own benefit, but the Governors did not seem to think that Handel's word and promise were enough, so they endeavoured to secure their rights by Act of Parliament, and drew up a petition accordingly. This made the composer furious, "For what?" he cried, with many expletives. "Shall the Foundling put mine oratorio in the Parliament! Mine musick shall not go to the Parliament!"

During Handel's residence in England he saw a gradual change going on in the musical world, and often said, "When I first came hither I found among the English many good players, but no composers; but now they are all composers and no players."

One of these small composers, a Rev. Mr. Felton, published some organ concertos by subscription, as so many things were published in those days, and finding a fair amount of success thought he might as well try a second set. He knew that if Handel would but put his name on the list, it would help him greatly, and as he did not know him personally, he requested Mr. Brown, the leader of the King's Band, to ask this favour for him.

Brown and Handel were on very good terms, so

one morning, while the latter was being shaved, Brown called, and very gently told him of the clergyman's ambition.

It should not cost Handel a farthing he said; Mr Felton would feel honoured if he would accept a copy; all he wanted was the great composer's name among his list of subscribers.

Up jumped Handel in a rage, his face all covered with lather, and came down on the astonished Brown with most violent language, and adding—"A parson make concertos! Why he no make sermons?"

An instance in which he acknowledged a mistake very thoroughly is told by Dr. Burney. In *Judas Maccabeus* there is a duet, *From these Dread Scenes*, which Handel one day took in his pocket to the house of Frasi, a famous singer of the day, who was preparing to take part in it. Dr. Burney was there, so Handel sat down to the harpsichord and himself sang Frasi's part. The doctor looking over his shoulder, hummed the second so much to Handel's pleasure that he told him to sing it out. When he did so there was something wrong, and Handel flew into one of his passions. Burney waited a few minutes, and when he was calmer, ventured to say he thought there must be some mistake in the score. Handel looked and found it really was so, and had the good sense to say at once, "I beg your pardon. I am a very odd dog. Master Schmidt is to blame."

An instance of large hearted benevolence was shown by Handel when Cuzzoni came to England in 1748, broken in health and voice, and the mere wreck of her former self. He actually allowed her to sing in the *Messiah* at Covent Garden in spite of her past behaviour to him, and her lack of power to render his music with the proper effect and expression. It was one of her last appearances, and she went back to Florence to face a life of poverty. In her prosperous days she had never saved a farthing, or made a true friend, so she had to support herself by making buttons, and only just kept above starvation point.

While Handel was so generously giving performances for the benefit of the Foundling Hospital, and crowds came to hear them, he was not so fortunate in his own private venture at Covent Garden, where on the 16th of March, 1750, he brought out his new oratorio, *Theodora*, which is now little known by name, though it contains the familiar and deathless *Angels ever Bright and Fair*, *Venus Laughing from the Skies*, *Lord to Thee each Night and Day*, and *He Saw the Lovely Youth*, which last Handel himself thought a finer conception than even the Hallelujah Chorus in the *Messiah*.

Strange to say, the public did not care for *Theodora*, much to the vexation of its composer, though he made the best of it, and when the house was terribly empty, said, "Never mind, the music will sound the better."

The King went regularly, whether anybody else did or no, but then he was a true lover of music, and liked a good long evening of it. Lord Chesterfield was met on one of these nights leaving Covent Garden very early, so a friend asked if he was dismissed from attendance on his Royal master, or whether there was no oratorio that evening. "Yes," answered Lord Chesterfield, "they are still performing; but I thought it best to retire, lest I should disturb the King in his privacy."

Handel himself declared that the Jews who had crowded to *Judas Maccabeus* would not go to *Theodora* because it was a Christian story, and that the great ladies of the day would not go because it was not sufficiently interesting to suit them.

As there was so much room to spare he intimated to his friends that he would give free admission to members of the musical profession, and two gentlemen who had the offer did not accept it. Afterwards, when the *Messiah* was going to be performed, and the latter asked for free tickets, Handel exclaimed—

"Oh, your servant, meine Herren, you are—dainty! You would not go to *Theodora;* there was room enough to dance there, when that was performed."

When the season was over Handel went on his last visit to Halle, where he was warmly welcomed,

and found that his god-daughter had grown up, and had several step-brothers and sisters. On the road between the Hague and Haarlem he met with an accident, for his carriage was overturned, and he was severely bruised and shaken. This, perhaps, marks the time when infirmities began to grow upon him ; for afterwards he did not compose so quickly, and his writing began to waver. The next year he went to Cheltenham to take the waters, and found his sight failing, which depressed his spirits terribly.

However, it was during 1751 that he composed *Jephthah*, his last great work, and by no means the least beautiful of his oratorios. He did not write it right off at once, but altered and re-composed a great deal of it, which showed a great change in his habit of working. *Jephthah* has always been a great favourite, and in its music the well-known Beard, Braham, and Sims Reeves have won some of their best laurels.

From this time the oratorio season began to be more profitable. The petty jealousy and spite shown to Handel by those who had in previous years taken up Buononcini died out, and he began once more to save money. This was no doubt a comfort to him under the trial that was now threatening. The symptoms of failing sight were those of the complaint called *gutta serena*, and when he consulted Mr. Samuel Sharp, of Guy's Hospital, about the end of

1751, he was told that the best he could hope for would be freedom from pain. In the sadness that settled upon him after hearing the oculist's opinion he feared he should never be able to conduct his oratorios again, and sent for John Christopher Smith, the son of his friend and secretary, whose musical education he had so carefully provided for, asking that he would come to him at once. Just at that time Smith was travelling abroad with a gentleman of large fortune, to whose affection and influence he looked forward as of great future value. But Handel had been a second father to him, besides being his own father's constant friend and helper, and he lost no time in returning home. He undertook to play the organ at Covent Garden with Handel sitting near and giving hints as he went on. One evening when *Samson* was performed, Beard, the great tenor, sang with deep feeling, the lines,

> "Total eclipse—no sun, no moon,
> All dark amidst the blaze of noon."

And the sight of the composer sitting by the organ he loved, and unable to see the house where he had known so many successes, was so pathetic that there were few spectators without tears in their eyes. In the following May, however, Handel had one or both of his eyes operated on by Mr. Bramfield, surgeon to the Princess of Wales, and the operation at first appeared successful, but in a very short time his sight

failed again, till in January, 1753, he was nearly, if not quite, blind. His biographers, however, differ as to whether he could or could not see a little. It is certain that after the season at Covent Garden when young Smith played for him, he managed very well, playing his concertos, &c., from memory, and if that failed him, improvising as he went on.

He still enjoyed his various Royal pensions, and his friends tried to persuade him to keep a carriage, but all in vain; he felt that his income was precarious, and only consented to hire one when he required it. At first he felt very nervous about playing the organ at the oratorios, and told Mr. Sharp, the surgeon, that he feared he should not be able to do it. Thereupon Mr. Sharp recommended a blind musician as his assistant, saying that his memory had never been known to fail. Handel laughed heartily and exclaimed—

"Mr. Sharp, have you never read the Scriptures? Do you not remember, if the blind lead the blind they both fall into the ditch?"

Handel was a great lover of pictures, and not only went to see all that were exhibited and all the collections within his reach, but was the owner of some fine Rembrandts given him by Mr. Bernard Granville, a Derbyshire gentleman, to whom he returned them by a codicil to his will.

As old friends died out Handel became more and

more solitary; he did not care to make new ones, and spent much of his time alone, or in the company of the Smiths. He was sometimes to be seen at Court, and also at Leicester House, where the Prince of Wales lived, and he was very fond of Mrs. Cibber, to whose house he liked to go on Sunday evenings. There was a time when he had been severe upon her for not knowing as much about music as he thought she ought, but her sweet voice and sweeter temper, and kind thoughtful ways had won his affection and they were great friends.

It was she who once asked him what he thought of Gluck as a composer, and received the answer, "He knows no more of Contrapunto as mein cook, Waltz."

At Mrs. Cibber's Handel met Quin, the actor, who was very fond of music, and one day she persuaded him to play on the harpsichord that Quin might hear. Handel played the overture to *Siroe*, which ends with a kind of jig, and shortly afterwards went away. The lady then asked Quin whether he did not think the musician had a charming hand.

"A *hand*, madam! you mistake; it's a foot," was the reply.

"Pooh, pooh!" retorted Mrs. Cibber; "has he not a fine finger?"

"Toes, by Jove! madam!"

The truth was that Handel's hands had become

so fat that there were only dimples to be seen at the knuckles, and his fingers were so curved and compact that they were scarcely visible. This must sound strange to those who think of the harpsichord only as a smaller piano, but it was not so much intended for execution as for effect, the keys being pressed softly down like those of an organ.

The speech once made by Handel to Frasi, who had not the least notion of applying herself to anything, was very mild. She said she was going to learn Thorough Bass so as to accompany herself, and Handel held up his hands exclaiming, "Oh, what may we not expect!"

It was probably in Handel's later years, when he spent so much time alone, that he got into a habit of talking to himself. He had been persuaded to take a boy into his house who was supposed to be quite a pattern of goodness and diligence, as well as to have a great talent for music. Handel did not believe in him, though others did, and it proved in the long run that he was right, for the boy behaved very ill, and ran away. One day the musician was walking by himself in St. James's Park, pacing slowly up and down, when some one heard him say, "The father was deceived, the mother was deceived, but I was not deceived. He is ein scoundrel and good for nothing."

Perhaps it was also when his sight failed that his hearing grew keen, and he listened for music in all

passing sounds. He once told Lady Luxborough that the airs for many of his songs were suggested by the street cries, for which London was then so famous. And in a fragment of manuscript in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge there are the words, "Buoy my matches, my matches buoy," with a few notes and a memorandum, "John Shaw, near a brandy shop St. Giles in Tyburn Road sells matches about."

These few words show that Handel's quick ear had caught the exact sound into which cockneys distort such words as "I" and "buy" and "try."

About this time Handel often wiled away the heavy hours by walking about Marylebone Gardens with Mr. Fountayne, a clergyman of a very musical turn of mind, who took pupils of good family at high terms. It was almost one of the sights of London to see these little fellows walk two by two to Marylebone Church on Sundays, in gold laced velvet coats of delicate colours, with their lace ruffles and collars, cocked hats, silk stockings and buckled shoes. And on week days they used to play about the gardens while Mr. Fountayne and Handel strolled to and fro, chatting, or sat down and heard the band play orchestral music.

"Come, Mr. Fountayne," said Handel, one summer evening, "let us listen to this piece, I want know your opinion of it."

So they sat down and listened attentively for a while, and the old clergyman turning to his friend observed—

"It is not worth listening to—it is very poor stuff."

"You are right, Mr. Fountayne," answered Handel; "it is very poor stuff. I thought so myself when I had finished it."

The clergyman, who had not known who the piece was by before, began to apologise, but Handel told him there was no need, for the music had been hastily composed when he was much pressed for time, and the criticism was "as correct as it was honest."

A man who could so well distinguish between the value of his own works would have felt the full value of the opinions of one or two musicians who lived and flourished long after his death. It is related that when Beethoven lay dying he pointed to Dr. Arnold's edition of Handel's works and said, "*Das ist das wahre*,"—"that is the truth!"

Mozart, too, is reported to have declared that "Handel understands effect better than any of us. When he chooses he strikes like a thunderbolt."

Smaller men have said that he borrowed other people's ideas, picked up pebbles and polished them until they became precious stones, but never said whose the pebbles originally were. Such speeches

are very unjust, for Handel never hesitated to acknowledge where any idea that he utilised came from, as for instance the ancient Calabrian *Pifa* he heard in Rome in his youth, and utilised in expressing the adoration of the shepherds in the *Messiah*, and the London street cries as above mentioned.

CHAPTER X.

NEARING THE END.

ALTHOUGH *Jephthah* was Handel's last oratorio, he was not idle after its production, but with Smith's co-operation kept on adding and altering, improving and expanding many of his works. On Sundays he was a regular and devout worshipper at St. George's, Hanover Square, and all through the oratorio seasons he was in his place every night, and as indefatigable as ever. His old friend Schmidt, or Smith, was still his treasurer, and they lived on the best of terms, till one day when on pleasure bent, and perhaps also that Handel might take the chalybeate waters, they went down to Tunbridge together. No cloud had ever come between them before, but on that occasion they quarrelled, no doubt about some trifle, and Smith instead of waiting till the storm had blown over, left

Handel to his own devices and went off. However passionate the musician may have been, this was not very kind considering that he was nearly, if not quite, blind, and needed a companion for safety's sake.

Handel was so hurt and angry at being thus deserted that he declared he would never meet Smith again, and though many tried to reconcile the two old companions, it was all in vain. While in this frame of mind Handel one day said to John Christopher Smith, who had behaved like a son to him in return for the affection and care shown him from childhood, that he intended to put his name in his will instead of his father's. But the young man with rare right feeling refused to hear of it, and declared that if Handel persisted, he, too, would leave him and never assist with the oratorios any more.

"What will the world think," he asked, "if you set aside my father and leave his legacy to me? They will suppose I tried, and succeeded in undermining him for my own advantage."

Perhaps Handel had not seen it before in that light, and perhaps, too, he felt that he could not get on at the oratorios without his young friend and helper, so no more was said on the subject for a long while. But about three weeks before Handel died he asked Smith, junior, to receive the Sacrament with him, and he, feeling almost equal affection for both

his elders, asked him how he could think of communicating when he was not at peace with all the world, and especially with the friend of his youth who had been faithful to him through clouds and sunshine for the last thirty years. This was more than Handel's warm heart could resist, and he was at once reconciled to the father whose son had so well pleaded his cause.

Towards the close of Handel's life, the Prince of Wales, the

"Fred, who was alive and is dead,"

of the rhymesters, left the dying-out party opposed to the composer, and became one of his fervent admirers. His son, afterwards George III., was then a very small boy, but whenever Handel came to the red house in Leicester Square, he used to listen to his playing with such close attention and interest, that one day the old man asked him if he liked the music. The child answered so enthusiastically that Handel cried, "A good boy, a good boy, you shall protect my fame when I am dead."

And George III. did always keep his early admiration for Handel, and cherished his renown. Many years after, when an old man at Windsor, he asked Mrs. Wesley, the widow of the poet of Methodism, who, like so many Welshwomen, had been celebrated in youth for her beautiful voice, what she used to sing.

"Handel's oratorio songs," was the answer.

"Handel!" exclaimed the King; "there is nothing to be compared to him."

One Sunday during the King's illness, when the Queen and her daughters were very sad at heart, they asked Charles Wesley, who was then in great favour at Court, to play to them on the harpsichord, saying, "We know Mr. Wesley is like His Majesty, partial to Handel!" and were very much touched, when the sympathetic young man chose, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people."

Quite early in 1758 Handel's large appetite suddenly and completely forsook him, and he took it as a sure token that his race was nearly run. No plausible reasoning would he accept, nor indulge in any false hopes. But he was not afraid of death, and went quietly on with his duties to the last. The oratorio season of 1759 began on March 2nd, and he directed ten performances, the last being that of the *Messiah* on the 6th of April. To all outsiders he appeared as well as he had usually been for some time, and night after night he used to take the receipts home with him in his carriage. One night he told a friend, who often paid him a visit in the treasury, that the weight of the bag containing his gold and silver would have been as likely to make him ill, as poor Correggio's copper made him, if he had as far to carry it. This, of course, was in allusion to his increasing weakness.

On April 6th he was as bright and energetic as usual, but when the performance of the *Messiah* was over he was taken with faintness, which he at once felt was the beginning of the end. He was taken home and put to bed, and never rose again, though he lingered eight days, and was sensible to the last. On the 11th of April he added a fourth and last codicil to his will, and signed it himself. His medical attendant was Dr. Warren, who said that the dying man had a great desire to depart on Good Friday, "in hopes," to quote his own words, "of meeting his good God, his sweet Lord and Saviour, on the Day of His resurrection." This physician, who was present when he breathed his last, says that his wish was fulfilled, as he died just before midnight on April 13th, 1759, the following Sunday being Easter Day. It does not seem very important, but there has been a great deal of discussion as to whether he really departed then or a few hours later.

The funeral took place at eight o'clock in the evening of the following Friday, April 20th, in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. The Dean, prebends, and all the choir took part in the service, and at least three thousand persons were present.

What a scene it must have been, for the dark old Abbey was very imperfectly lighted with its candles and flambeaux, and the music must have been

strangely thrilling as the High Priest of Melody was laid to his last rest!

To Roubiliac was entrusted the carving of the monument which may be seen to this day against the western wall of the south transept, and for which Handel had left £600 in his will.

This sculptor had many years before executed an admirable statue of Handel, and a cast of the face taken after death enabled him to bring the one on the monument into very close resemblance with the Handel with whom Londoners had of late years been familiar.

In the upper part of the arch there is an angel playing on a harp, and in the background an organ. The composer stands up as if listening, with a pen in his left hand, and his right resting on a score of the *Messiah*, on which the first bars of *I Know that My Redeemer Liveth* may be traced. Underneath there is simply the name, with the dates of birth and death, and a shield bearing the family coat-of-arms.

We know but little of Handel's last hours, though a letter from his friend and legatee, Mr. Smyth, of New Bond Street, to Mr. Barnard Granville, was published in Mr. Delany's autobiography and correspondence about twenty years ago, which we give entire—

"Dear Sir,—According to your request to me, when you left London, that I would let you know

when our good friend departed this life : on Saturday last, at eight o'clock in the morn, died the great and good Mr. Handel. He was sensible to the last moment; made a codicil to his will on Tuesday, ordered to be buried privately in Westminster Abbey, and a monument not to exceed £600 for him. I had the pleasure to reconcile him to his old friends; he saw them and forgave them, and let all their legacies stand! In the codicil he left many legacies to his friends; and among the rest he left me £600, and has left to you the two pictures you formerly gave him. He took leave of all his friends on Friday morning, and desired to see nobody but the doctor and apothecary, and myself. At seven o'clock in the morning he took leave of me, and told me we should meet again. As soon as I was gone, he told his servant not to let me come to him any more, for that he had now done with the world. He died as he lived, a good Christian, with a true sense of his duty to God and man, and in perfect charity with all the world. If there is anything that I can be of further service to you, please let me know. I was to have set out for Bath to-morrow, but must attend the funeral and shall then go next week."

Some weeks before Handel's death his twelfth performance of the *Messiah*, for the benefit of the Foundling Hospital, had been announced for the 3rd

of May, but as he had been in his grave nearly a fortnight before the appointed date, the younger Smith directed and played it, and continued to do so every year till 1761, during which time it brought in £1,332 to the Hospital. From the latter date till 1777, Mr. John Stanley, the blind organist, mentioned by Mr. Sharp to Handel, undertook it, and the receipts realised £2,032, so that adding these sums to those produced during the composer's life, the *Messiah* was the means of contributing considerably over £10,000 to a most deserving charity.

About ten years after Handel's death, Mr. Stanley, who lost his sight when only two years of age, told Dr. Boyce, and some other friends, that he had always taken what Handel told him about his childish love for music and what he actually played in early years, with a great many grains of salt, and could not credit it at all till he met with little Charles Wesley, who at four years old was a musical prodigy. Those who remembered and loved Handel, such as Mr. Granville Beard, the tenor singer, the Riches, and others, took great interest in this boy, who ultimately became a very fine organist, as well as a favourite with George III. and the Prince Regent, and in due time taught Princess Charlotte; but he had no other gift, and it might almost be said no other sense than music.

How Handel was continually in the minds of his friends, is shewn by their comments on this boy's

playing. Mr. Kelway, a noted musician, then organist at St. Martin's-in-the-fields, said—

"Handel's hands did not lie on the instrument better then yours do."

"How Handel would have shaken his sides if he could have heard him."

"I wish Handel were alive to hear him."

And Mr. Russell, a portrait painter, of some eminence in his day, observed that if he had been outside the door listening, not knowing that Handel was dead, he should have believed that the great master himself was playing the well-known music.

Handel's will, with its four codicils, was a very comprehensive one; he left a considerable sum of money to his god-daughter, the eldest child of his late sister and Dr. Michaelsen of Halle, £2,400 to the elder Smith, his large harpsichord, small chamber organ, music books and a considerable sum of money to the younger Smith, his great organ, then standing at Covent Garden Theatre, to Mr. Rich, and two pictures by Denner to Mr. Jennens.

Of course there were many more bequests to friends and servants, for the *maestro* had saved about £20,000, and distributed it very thoughtfully, but those above-mentioned are the most generally interesting items. He once wished to alter the arrangements about his music-books, telling John Christopher Smith that he should like to leave them to the University

of Oxford, and would compensate him by a legacy of £3,000. But the young man would not hear of it, so Handel did not insist, or alter his will. Some years afterwards, the King of Prussia offered Smith £2,000 for them, but he refused it, and presented all the MSS., Roubiliac's bust of Handel, and his harpsichord, to George III. The odd thing is, that though the music is at Buckingham Palace, and the bust at Windsor Castle, the harpsichord is at the South Kensington Museum, and does not appear ever to have been in the possession of royalty.

Lady Rivers, who was John Christopher Smith's daughter-in-law, had this harpsichord which was made by Andreas Ruckers, at Antwerp, in 1651, and is a handsome double one, with two rows of keys, and a number of monkeys holding a concert inlaid on the sounding board. When she died it was bought by a Mr. Wickham, who again sold it to Mr. Hawtry, a Canon of Winchester. Dr. Chard, the organist at the Cathedral, was the owner of it after Mr. Hawtry died, and it was ultimately bought by a Mr. Hooper of that city, who sold it, and it was eventually placed as a relic in the Kensington Museum.

Some people have disputed the fact of this being Handel's harpsichord, because one of his biographers mentions that from long use the keys of his "Rucker" were worn and hollowed out like so many spoons, but

a great authority on the subject declares that the key-boards are comparatively modern, and not the ones originally belonging to the harpsichord. One wonders how any person can have been such a Goth as to remove the keys worn by the touch of Handel's fingers, but as the instrument has been through so many hands, it is possible that some of its earlier owners may have renewed the key-boards for convenience of practising, and if the old ones were thus purposely removed and put aside in a lumber room they may easily have been lost sight of altogether.

Charles Wesley had an harpsichord by Burkat Shudi, which was said to have belonged to Handel, and he lived so much among people who remembered the author of the *Messiah*, that the tradition was likely to be true. This was bought by some private individual after his death, and no one has ever taken the trouble to trace it. It may perhaps have belonged to Handel before his first bankruptcy, for it is thought that when that misfortune came, he sold a good deal of furniture, and never replaced it, as the effects at the house in Brook Street were very poor and meagre. They were purchased by John de Bourke, his man servant, for £48, and doubtless dropped to pieces long ago.

One of Roubiliac's busts of Handel is at the Foundling Hospital, and there are a great many of his portraits in existence. A small one by Denner

was presented by Lady Rivers to the Sacred Harmonic Society, a full length portrait by Hudson is preserved at Gopsall, and the Queen has a copy of it at Buckingham Palace. The Royal Society of Musicians also has two by the same artist, and one by Sir James Thornhill is in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. A portrait by Forstemann is also said to be in existence at Halle, and, with various trinkets once belonging to Handel, is owned by some descendants of his niece Johanna Friderica Floerchen, *née* Michaelsen.

Either Handel was not much of a letter-writer, or very few of his epistles have been preserved. As most of the latter are in English, a language he did not write very fluently, we may naturally suppose that there must have been some considerable number in German to his mother and other relations and friends, with all of whom he was on affectionate terms; but some families hoard up old letters, and others do not, and perhaps his brother-in-law and cousins were among the latter. The few letters we know of are those written to Halle, after his mother's death, the correspondence with Mr. Jennens, which is now at Packington, the Earl of Aylesford's seat, and some letters to Mr. Granville, now in the possession of Lady Llanover.

The collection of MS. music at Buckingham Palace is in eighty-seven folio volumes, and there are also a great many of Smith's transcripts, and some

early printed editions. The Fitzwilliam collection consists of small but interesting fragments, and the little there is in the British Museum is of the same character.

There are two remarkable collections of Smith's transcripts, one of which is in the Public Library at Hamburg, to which it was sold at a low price by Mr. Schoelcher, who bought it very cheaply from a Bristol bookseller, who purchased it after Lady Rivers' death.

The other one was probably sold by Smith himself to some one, from whom Dr. Ireland, Dean of Westminster, purchased it. He gave it to a Mr. Brownsmith, who left or sold it to Mr. Barrett Lennard, of Hampstead. There are eighty-five volumes in all, sixty-four of which are bound in calf, and are kept in an old oak bookcase made on purpose for them by an earlier owner.

A few personal relics of Handel are still in existence. His watch, with the anvil and hammer, supposed to have inspired the *Harmonious Blacksmith*, and other items, were offered for sale by public auction in 1872, when the collection of the late Mr. Snoxell, of Charterhouse Square, was brought to the hammer, but was bought in by the executors.

A pitch-pipe which Handel always carried about with him, and which he gave to Dr. Burney, belongs to Mr. George Mence Smith, one of the committee of

the Sacred Harmonic Society, who purchased it when that body was broken up.

Handel's tuning fork, or one that he used a good deal, belongs to the Rev. G. T. Driffield. He left it behind him at the Foundling Hospital after the famous first performance of the *Messiah* for that charity in 1751.

How the English nation delights to honour the great composer who "set the Bible to music" has been shown on many occasions since his death. In 1784 the centenary of his birth was celebrated by grand performances of his works in Westminster Abbey, and in the Pantheon, Oxford Street, then recently built for somewhat the same purposes as the Albert Hall is used for now. It was a year too early, but when such a change as that from the "Old Style" to the "New" one takes place during a man's life, his contemporaries as well as succeeding generations are apt to get their dates somewhat mixed and confused.

George III. was present in Westminster Abbey, and so much did he enjoy the *Hallelujah Chorus*, that by a wave of his hand he commanded it to be repeated, and when the *Amen Chorus* came he did the same. Very few people apparently care now for the latter, as it comes at the end of the oratorio when everybody wraps up and goes away, thus disturbing those who wish to listen, and behaving as though they themselves did not think it worth

hearing. Justice is only done to it when it is used as an isolated chorus in the middle of a concert.

The organ was played by Dr. Joah Bates at this Handel Commemoration in Westminster Abbey, and he put in a great many more harmonies than were written. The late Sir George Smart, then a little Chapel Royal chorister, turned over the leaves for him and appeared to be very much surprised. The organist, reading this in his face, said, "You seem curious to discover my authority for the chords I have just been playing."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, "for I don't see them in the score."

"That is true," rejoined Dr. Bates, "but Handel used himself to supply the harmonies, just as I have been doing, and I have often seen him do it."

This came with the weight of authority, and the little chorister was more than satisfied.

In June, 1859, the centenary of Handel's death was commemorated by a three days' Festival, at which his works were performed on a very splendid scale, and similar but not quite such elaborate performances were held every three years up to 1883. In 1885 the usual Festival was celebrated one year earlier than usual, because of its being the two-hundredth anniversary of the great composer's birth.

Most emphatically may Handel be styled a "World's Worker." His quickness in production was from force of genius, perfect knowledge, and constant industry, and his masterpieces will endure and delight the world to the end of time.

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